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September 2010

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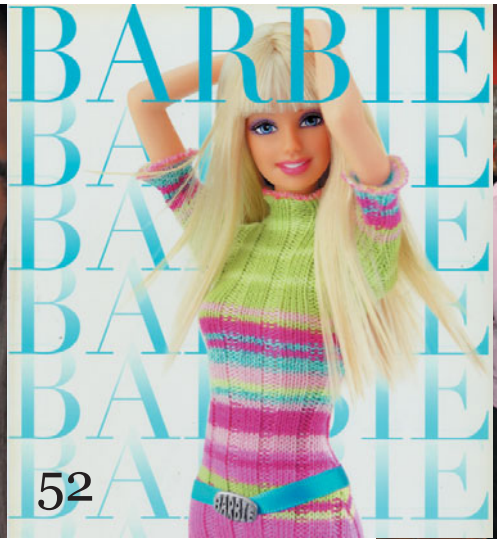

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On the Cover:

See page 42 for this month's fashion editorial, *The New Victorian*, photographed exclusively for OUTLOOKS by Gerard Yunker, in loving memory of Lincoln Phillip.

Ryan is wearing black pleated jumpsuit and tan wool neck cowl, both by **Paul Hardy,** Brown leather slashed back vest by Grai from **Primitive,** Black studded and woven belt by Nudie from **Leo**

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editor's notebook

~ BRETT TAYLOR

Here it is September, and the 2010 summer of Pride celebrations are pretty much wrapped up from coast to coast. The various events now leave us with some great memories, albeit probably somewhat foggy memories for some. OUTLOOKS had the opportunity and distinct pleasure to have been able to participate in a vast number of the Pride events.

Toronto was the first stop, and for me, personally, the one that I will remember the most. It was there that, with the assistance of Pride Toronto and Mancrunch.com, my partner of eight years and I got married. We were lucky enough to be one of the six couples from across North America chosen to help celebrate the 5th anniversary of the legalization of same-gender marriage in Canada by actually getting married on the Mancrunch.com float as it snaked along the parade route in front of an estimated 1.3 million onlookers. Needless to say, it was a great weekend for us. But, it was also an amazingly well-executed event that drew tens of thousands of people from across Canada and the US to Toronto (even after having been denied the Federal Government grant.) By comparison, I wonder how many tourists were generated by the "ribfest" in that small Southern Manitoba community that did receive funding.

Our next stop was **Halifax** Pride. And, for a city of only about 300,000 people, they sure do know how to throw a party. It was great! Did you know that their Pride parade takes over 1.5 hours to pass a single point and that it is the largest parade of any kind in the Maritimes? Even Santa himself

takes second billing compared to Pride! Also, a huge "hats off" has to go to Destination Halifax and the Halifax business community as there were Pride flags flying and Pride displays of one kind or another in pretty much every retail outlet in the downtown core—not just in the "gay area," but everywhere. Halifax embraces Pride and, overall, is a wonderful, very accepting community. There are a lot of Canadian cities of equal or even much greater populations that could learn a lot from these folks on how to celebrate with Pride.

OUTLOOKS' third Pride event was **Vancouver**, where the warm coastal weather and beaches provided a perfect setting for the festival and partying. Whether enjoying the fair and live musical enter-tainment on Sunset Beach, the boat cruises along the harbor, or attending the parade with the over 600,000 other spectators, it was hard to avoid the crowds. Yet, it was the feelings of unity and good will shared by all of the festivalgoers that made one want to immerse themselves in the events, and become a part of the crowd too.

We closed out the summer of travel with **Montréal** Pride. Of course, like Toronto, it was a massive event of colour and sound, and was attended again by a vast number of gay tourists from the US—predominantly Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, NYC, etc. In Montréal, we also missed seeing the parade by our being in the parade. This time, we were assisting Capital Pride (Ottawa) with their entry that helped to raise funds for Montréal Pride as well as their own.

In every location, we participated in the Community Fair events where we met and spoke with thousands of readers to gain insight about the publication—the readers' likes, dislikes and recommendations. We learned a great deal in the process, and, over the next few months, we will be implementing some of what we were told. This face-to-face input opportunity is always better than a print or electronic survey, in my opinion.

That's the way I see it, anyway. O

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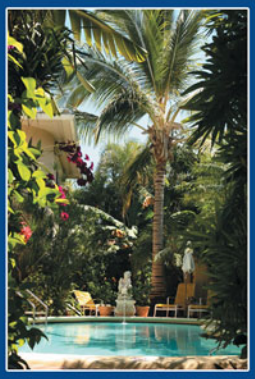

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European Pride

Gay Paris was indeed very gay as over 800,000 queer men, women and their allies took part in the Marche des Fiertés at the end of June. The theme for this year's march was Violences, discriminations: ASSEZ! Liberté et égalité, partout et toujours (Violence and discrimination: Enough! Freedom and equality, everywhere and always.)

In Budapest, a massive security presence prevented any violent altercations from happening during that city's Pride march. While some anti-gay protesters—mostly young skinheads—made their feelings known, police kept them from doing any more than shouting homophobic taunts. In addition, subway escape routes were made known to the marchers beforehand. In a city which has known violence during previous Pride celebrations, this is, indeed, progress.

When Moscow's mayor, for the fifth year in a row, banned any Pride celebrations in June, two small impromptu marches took place anyway before being dispersed by the authorities. Then, in July, another gay rights protest march took place in St. Petersburg in front of the Hermitage Museum. Six gay rights protesters were arrested, as were several anti-gay protesters who were charged with hooliganism for carrying weapons.

Over a million people gathered in the streets of London as that city's Pride Parade wound its way through the heart of the United Kingdom's capital. Prominent among the participants were gay MP Nick Herbert—one of about 15 out members of Britain's parliament—and Equality Minister Lynne Featherstone.

Poland has a history of repression of queer rights and it was for that very reason that Warsaw was chosen as the site of this year's EuroPride March. Many of the protesters carried banners calling for acceptance of queer rights. In spite of anti-gay protesters, who heckled and jeered from the sidelines, the marchers managed to create a festive atmosphere of celebration.

Middle East

There were mixed emotions during Tel Aviv Pride this year, and a moment's silence was observed to remember the dead youths who were slain during the shooting at the youth centre last August. The mother of one of the dead young men spoke to the crowd about the need for acceptance and respect for difference. Many of Israel's top music celebrities and members of parliament took part in the march, and the celebrations ended with a giant beach party! In Jerusalem, that city's march ended at the Knesset, Israel's parliament building, to mark the need for equal rights and protection for members of the queer community in Israel.

In Syria, more than 25 men were arrested during a police raid on private gay parties during March and April of this year. After more than three months in police custody, the men were released and allowed to return to their homes and families. The reasons for the release are not known; but some sources say that the authorities were embarrassed by the media attention in the international press.

A safe house in Iraq was raided by police in June, the inhabitants—two gay men, a lesbian and two transgendered persons—were arrested, computers confiscated and the house burned to the ground. One person later showed up in hospital and the whereabouts of the other five people is unknown. Gay rights activists fear that they have been taken to the Interior Ministry, where there have been reports over the years of gay men and women being tortured and executed.

Iranian authorities raided a private party and arrested between nine and seventeen persons in Shiraz. The personal belongings of these individuals were also taken to the detention centre. The files are reported to be labelled "gang of faggots in Shiraz." Equally disturbing is the sudden disappearance of Mohammad Mostafaei, a human rights lawyer, whose clients include a youth sentenced to death for homosexual activities.

Lt. Dan Choi Discharged from American Military

Although the news was not unexpected, still it came as something of a shock when Dan Choi, Iraqi war veteran, Arabic linguist, West Point graduate and out gay man, received official confirmation that he had been discharged under the provisions of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT). Since coming out publicly on the *Rachel Maddow* television show, Choi has been an outspoken opponent of the policy of DADT, and in March of this year, he and Captain Jim Pietrangelo chained themselves to the fence in front of the White House in protest. The two were charged with civil disobedience, although the charges were later dropped. This may or may not have anything to do with the fact that Choi and Pietrangelo had subpoenaed President Obama for their trial.

At a recent convention of Netroots Nation, after his honourable discharge had been announced, Choi publicly handed over his West Point ring to Harry Reid, the Senate majority leader and a fellow opponent of DADT, stating that the ring did not mean much to him anymore. Reid promised to return the ring to Choi when DADT is finally repealed.

Argentina says Sí, Sí to Same-Sex Marriage

After a long debate and a difficult campaign and, in spite of the strong opposition of the Catholic Church, the Argentinian senate voted 33 to 27 to allow same-sex marriage and adoption. Argentina becomes the first Latin American country to legalize same-sex marriage, although both Paraguay and Uraguay—Argentina's neighbours—are reported to be considering similar legislation. (Uraguay now has civil unions for gay couples.) President Cristina Kirchner, a proponent of queer rights, lost little time in signing the bill into law.

Hawaii's Governor Vetoes Same-Sex Marriage Bill

Linda Lingle, the Republican governor of the state of Hawaii, vetoed a bill which would have permitted the marriage of same-sex partners. Lingle claims that the issue should be decided by the people during a referendum. Critics say Lingle is more concerned about re-election and also allege that she showed favouritism to opponents of the bill during the public debate on the issue.

Her stand for the definition of traditional marriage seems a bit odd... considering she has been divorced twice so far.

Teen Power!

Constance McMillen, the shy teen from Mississippi who got thrust into national prominence after she sued her school for cancelling the prom rather than let her attend with her girlfriend, has won her case. In addition to paying McMillen $35,000 in damages for harassment and humiliation, the school board has agreed to update its anti-discrimination policy on issues of sexual orientation. McMillen, who was represented by the American Civil Liberties Union, pronounced herself satisfied that positive changes would come out of her very stressful situation.

Another teen, Derrick Martin, who attended his prom in Georgia with his boyfriend, but then was kicked out by his parents because of the attendant publicity, has launched a new website called **Project Life Vest** to help other queer teens who, like himself, suffer abandonment or discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

Iceland's Prime Minister "Marries" Her Lesbian Partner

Iceland had a unanimous vote in June in favour of same-sex marriage, and the country's Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdardottir had the transfer of her union with her long-time companion from a civil union to a marriage as soon as the law took effect. No special ceremony was required.

Rugby Team Fined for Homophobic Slurs

The Castleford Tigers, a British rugby team, have been fined £40,000 after some of their fans chanted homophobic insults at Gareth Thomas, the out gay player for the opposing team, during a match. The tribunal for the Rugby Football League found that the Tigers did not make efforts to stop or prevent the remarks. The fine is considered to be an historic step in the macho sport of rugby.

Members of Chicago Blackhawks and Chicago Cubs participate in Gay Pride

The Windy City's Pride Parade had some historic entries this year. Ernie Banks of the Chicago Cubs participated, as did Brent Sopel of the Chicago Blackhawks. The Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup this year and Sopel proudly raised the shiny trophy high during the parade. Leading the parade was Chely Wright, the country singer who recently came out as a lesbian.

Queer Rights Group at the UN

After a long struggle, loads of red tape and great opposition from some religious and political leaders, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) has been granted consultative status at the United Nations. President Obama issued a public statement applauding the passing of the resolution.

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The Black & Blue Festival is Celebrating its 20th Anniversary this Year with the International Gay Community!

Participants from all over the world are invited to celebrate the Black & Blue Festival's 20th anniversary, taking place in Montreal, from October 6 to 12, 2010. This year's Black & Blue will be a celebration for all the people who have attended the event in the past, as well as for the new generation who want to experience what is seen as one of the best gay events on the planet.

The world renowned Black & Blue Party will take place on 10/10/10 at Palais des congrès de Montréal. Two rooms will feature a choice of music (house and trance), this year, to please a wider and diversified local and international clientele. The DJs who will perform during the night are: Mark Anthony, Rosabel (Ralphi Rosario & Abel), Paulette, and Chus & Ceballos, Aly & Fila, Simon Patterson, Gareth Emery, Carl Muren, and more! Widely recognized for its original artistic concepts, this year's Black & Blue Festival will showcase a concept developed in collaboration with lighting design expert François Roupinian of Lightemotion. Back once again for 2010 are technical director Sylvain Tessier and sound expert Éric Tourangeau, who has brilliantly orchestrated all sound-related aspects of nearly every Black & Blue event from the outset. The main Black & Blue evening event will include a block-buster show segment, as well as theme-based entertainment.

To find out more about the BBCM's plans for this year: **www.bbcm.org/information@bbcm.org**. (514) 875-7026.

DJ Jeffery Michael wins HOT GAY DJ title

The last official sanctioned event for the Vancouver Pride Season was the final for the HOT GAY DJ competition. Two rooms, each graced by a gorgeous patio at the J Lounge, were the home for eight Vancouver DJs vying for the title award. The last DJ standing was DJ Jeffery Michael, whom, after the three-month long competition of being scored by various promoters, producers and the audiences, took the highest score and ultimately the title of HOT GAY DJ 2010.

As the winner of the competition, DJ Jeffery Michael receives an international representation agreement with Mirateca Arts, along with a tour to various venues across the country and beyond. Terry Costa, the producer/manager, is excited to see such great, young talent being given a chance to shine on the world club stage. "Mirateca Arts will work with DJ Jeffery Michael on national and international exposure," says Costa, "he has a lot of talent and is definitely eager to succeed in the entertainment world, and is exactly the type of individual we are proud to add to our talent roster."

Jeffery Michael was born on Halloween night in downtown Vancouver, Canada. In 2001 ,Jeffery moved to San Francisco, California. It was there that his music talents inspired him to pursue DJing. After arriving back in Canada, Jeffery played at large Vancouver raves such as the internationally established Apex Concert. In 2009, he returned to the music scene, this time with a club approach. He has quickly come back as Vancouver's newest hot DJ sensation, armed with a new style of bass thumping, energy pumping Electro House, Progressive & Tech House tracks. Celebrities Nightclub, ClubZone Street Party, Pulse Night Club, Red X Lounge, Lotus Sound Lounge, J Lounge, 1181 Tight Lounge, Five Sixty Club, and the Sunset Beach TD Stage were already some of the top venues he's played at,along with the Vancouver 2010 Olympic events.

Photo: Shane Oosterhoff

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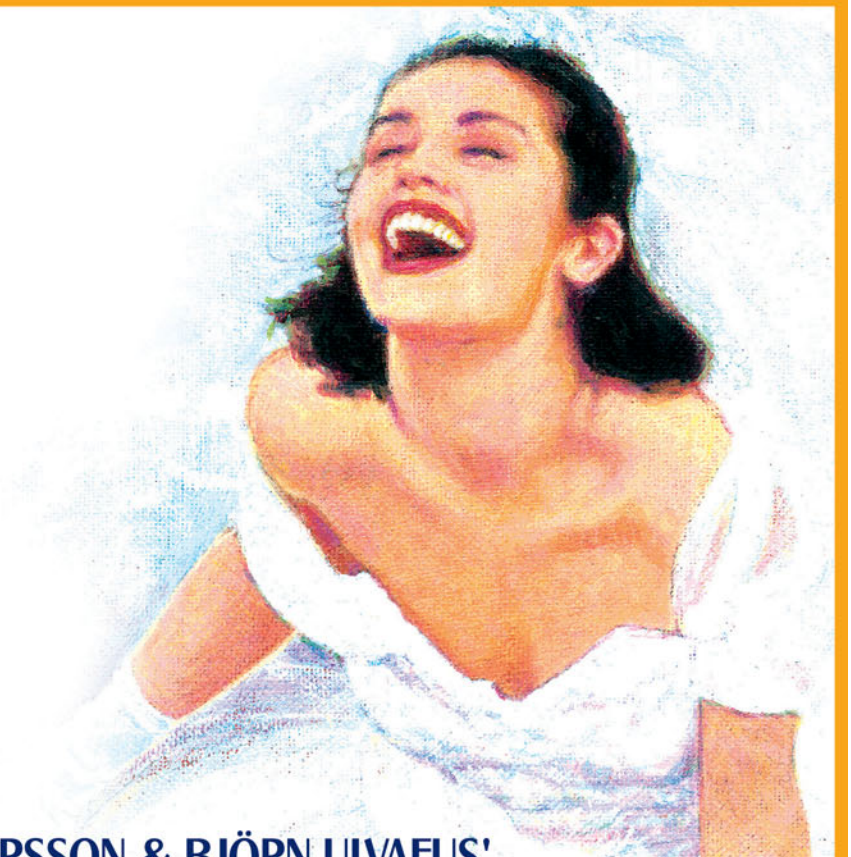

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Students Launch National Campaign to End the Ban on Gay Blood Donations

As a part of the Winnipeg Pride Week Celebrations, the Canadian Federation of Students unveiled new materials for its national campaign to end the discriminatory ban on gay blood donations. Currently, Canadian Blood Services has placed a lifetime ban on blood donations from men who have had sex with other men (MSM) anytime since 1977.

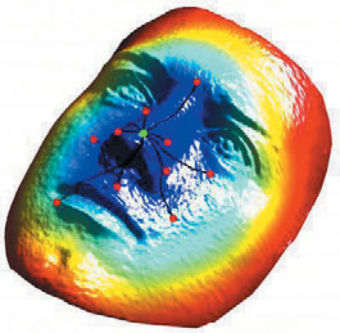
"The lifetime deferral that bans gay men from donating blood is a discriminatory policy that needs to be repealed," said Alanna Makinson, Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students-Manitoba. "The policy is based on outdated and flawed research. It only serves to further entrench negative stereotypes about the gay community."

Organizations, including the Canadian Federation of Students, Egale Canada and Canadian AIDS Society, have called upon the Canadian Blood Services to end the ban. Other jurisdictions in the world have more progressive, behaviour-based deferral criteria, and there is a growing movement from community groups and health organizations to see Canada move in the same direction. The American Association of Blood Banks, American Blood Centers and American Red Cross recently issued a joint statement saying, "the current lifetime deferral for men who have sex with other men is medically and scientifically unwarranted and [we] recommend that deferral criteria be modified."

"By launching this campaign during Pride Week here in Winnipeg, students in Manitoba honoured the historic roots of Pride as a political event," stated Lauren Bosc, LGBTT* Commissioner for the Canadian Federation of Students-Manitoba. "Although we've come a long way since the first Winnipeg Pride March in 1987, the ban on blood donations from the MSM population illustrates that we still have a long way to go."

Campaign materials include buttons, posters, informational postcards and an online action component that will allow supporters to e-mail the Federal Minister of Health, calling for an end to the ban.

The Canadian Federation of Students is Canada's national student organization, representing over one-half million students from over 80 student associations from coast to coast. For more information on the campaign, please visit **http://www.cfs-fcee.ca/endtheban**.



Gay Men's Brains Better at Remembering Faces

Gay men can recall familiar faces faster and more accurately than their heterosexual counterparts, because, like women, they use both sides of their brains, according to a new study by York University researchers.

The study, published in the journal, Laterality: Asymmetries of Body, Brain and Cognition, examined the influence of gender, sexual orientation and whether we're right-or-left-handed on our ability to recognize faces. It found that when memorizing and discriminating between faces, homosexual men show patterns of bilaterality—the usage of both sides of the brain - similar to heterosexual women. Heterosexual men tend to favour the right hemisphere for such tasks.

"Our results suggest that both gay men and heterosexual women code faces bilaterally. That allows for faster retrieval of stored information," says study lead author Jennifer Steeves, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Health.

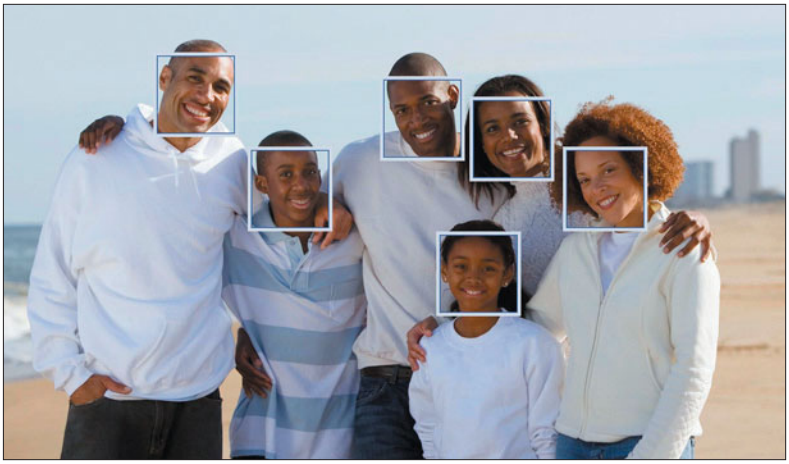
Study participants were asked to memorize photographs of ten faces, and differentiate them from 50 others, shown to them for only milliseconds each. The images were rendered in black and white and edited to remove ears, hair and blemishes, which can serve as obvious identifying cues. Participants then had to relay which faces were new, as quickly and accurately as possible.

Steeves and her colleagues also investigated the influence of hand dominance on such tasks. They found that left-handed heterosexual participants had better face recognition abilities than left-handed homosexuals, and also outperformed right-handed heterosexuals.

Hand dominance is thought to be linked with both hemispheric functioning and sexual orientation. Previous studies have shown that homosexual individuals are 39 percent more likely to be left-handed.

"Our findings are consistent with what we know about the organization and laterality of how we process faces depending on our gender, sexual orientation and handedness," Steeves says.

Anatomical studies of the corpus callosum, which facilitates communication between the left and right hemispheres of the brain, also indicate differences in handedness: women and left-handed men have been shown to possess larger corpus callosum and more symmetrical cortices than right-handed men.



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~ KEVIN ALDERSON, Ph.D., R. Psych.

Couch Talk –
The Musings of a Psychologist

Can Childhood Sexual Abuse Make You Gay?

Many ideas for a column happen serendipitously—if you ever have an idea for one by the way, email me. My husband asked me, "Is it true that childhood sexual abuse (CSA) causes boys to become gay?"

There is a substantial body of literature confirming that both gay males and lesbian females are at increased risk for physical and sexual abuse as children and also as adults. In one study, 942 heterosexual individuals (329 M, 613 F) were compared to 267 gay/lesbian people (124 M, 153 F). While 46 percent of the gay men and 22 percent of the lesbian women had experienced CSA, the numbers for the straight sample was seven percent and one percent, respectively. Most studies, however, suggest an estimated 20 to 28 percent of gay men experienced CSA with similar figures for lesbian women.

Sheldon Kennedy

One of the most consistent findings is that CSA in gay men is associated with high risk sexual behaviour—particularly unprotected anal intercourse—and consequently, it is contributing to the ongoing HIV epidemic. Through some mechanism, CSA interferes with adults' motivation, coping abilities, and interpersonal skills to protect themselves from infection. It seems likely that CSA contributes to self-hatred and to internalized homophobia, both of which are associated with lack of concern for oneself.

In fact, men who have sex with men (MSM) who experienced CSA are more likely to become sex trade workers than those who were not similarly abused. They are three times more likely to abuse alcohol and attempt suicide compared to their non-victimized counterparts. Other research finds that they are more likely to develop psychological disorders (e.g., anxiety, depression).

Not everyone who experienced CSA is negatively affected in adult years, however. Some minors derived pleasure from the encounters, a high of 66.3 percent of participants in a recent dissertation and 51 percent in a different study. In this second study, the researchers found a difference between those who found it pleasurable (often this was sexual activity with an adult not significantly older than the minor) and the 49 percent who experienced CSA as negative, abusive, and/or coercive. Only the group who experienced CSA negatively suffered from psychological maladjustment.

Research reviewed between 1966 and 2000 reveals a critical finding: MSM who experienced CSA are more likely to be confused about their sexual identity. Another critical piece of research found that male youth who were effeminate or who lacked secondary sexual characteristics (i.e., they were younger or less developed) were the most at risk of CSA.

So here are my conclusions. First, being a victim of CSA fucks you up in plain simple English. This is not surprising given that we are forced to trust adult caregivers to do their job and provide care (duh). Even in the Bible, it was exploitation that was most considered a sexual sin (e.g., hiring sex-trade workers, same-sex behaviour motivated by power and control).

Second, as Richard Isay wrote in 1996, gay boys are more likely to be sexually abused because men experience them differently: they are not like a typical "straight" boy. As research informs us, the ones abused are often stereotypically effeminate or un-differentiated (appearing like a girl) in appearance. They are, therefore, more helpless as victims. Furthermore, some cannot help but enjoy the physical and emotional pleasure that results from genital contact with an adult close in age who actually shares affection, while nonetheless selfishly getting their own sexual needs met with a vulnerable minor.

CSA does not turn straight boys gay anymore than it turns gay boys straight. Instead, as was the experience of NHL player Sheldon Kennedy, it makes straight boys psychologically damaged. CSA can create confusion about sexuality as a child is manipulated into believing that same-sex behaviour is okay for everyone —even someone simply trying to have a normal childhood. All of us need to go through a moratorium period where we carve out an individual identity. If that development is marred with sexual abuse, it will tarnish the psyche and rape the soul.

For gay boys, the damage is just as great for those who did not want the sexual activity. For them, it drives a stake into their hearts so deep that, for many, they can no longer care enough about themselves to protect themselves from HIV infection and avoid falling into the sex trade. CSA is a serious crime and must be dealt with by levying very serious penalties to the adult perpetrators, who are considered even the lowest-of-the-low in our penitentiary system. O

Couch Talk references can be found at www.outlooks.ca

Kevin Alderson can be contacted by confidential email at **alderson@ucalgary.ca**, or by confidential voice mail at 403-605-5234.

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Mistress Manners

Illustration: Perry Mah

Please contact Mistress Manners with your questions at:
mistressmanners@gmail.com

Dear Mistress Manners,

I've been in a real pickle lately. My girlfriend and I are in a long distance relationship and it's been tough. Before she moved away for work, we talked (again and again) about the idea of being non-monogamous and she said she didn't think she could handle it. She was only going to be away for four months, so I said okay. We talk on the phone and I masturbate a lot. For the first two months, this was working; but her contract got extended and she will be away for another four months. I don't think I can handle going that long without sex and I am starting to resent her for wanting me to. I've never been monogamous before; but I agreed to it with her because she said she needed that and I love her. To make matters worse, there are two other women who have caught my eye. I haven't acted on anything; but the chemistry is there and the flirtation is happening and I'm feeling deprived. I feel like I'm a time bomb waiting to go off. That's not a good sign, is it?

~ Ready to Bust Out

Dear Ready to Bust Out,

If you feel like a time bomb waiting to go off, then that's probably a good indication that things aren't working for you. Your girlfriend may indeed be lovely, and I believe that you love her (why else would you try to fight your own nature?) but you're also pining for these new crushes and feeling resentment.

It has taken Mistress a long time to come to this conclusion but here it is: we don't have to be in a relationship with every person we love. This is particularly true for queers because (yes, I'm generalizing) we so often feel things so strongly and yet don't want to suffer "conventional" relationships. It shouldn't be a huge surprise that poly is more popular in a community that has already rejected heterosexuality and a binary gender paradigm.

All this to say: don't beat yourself up for being a poly person who has fallen for a monogamous one. It happens. It's okay to still feel love for your girlfriend; but if you are certain that you are poly and she has made it clear that she is monogamous, you will probably have to end this. At the very least, you will have to, if you plan on pursuing your other crushes. You do have the option of investing in some good sex toys to tide you over until she gets back. What's six months, anyway? Let Mistress remind you that six months is shorter than many prison sentences, but also longer than most lesbians are willing to go without sex.

So, Mistress would like to remind you to review your Ethical Slut manual and think a bit about the difference between being in love and being in a relationship. You have more than a responsibility to your long distance girlfriend. You have a responsibility to yourself.

The name of the game here is honesty and if you're ready to bust out, it's time to let your girlfriend know.

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And Then There Were Nuns

After a 25-year absence, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence return to Canada

It's Official. After a 25-year hiatus, the most famous drag nuns in history have returned to Canada! With the unanimous endorsement of their North American Sisters on Monday, August 16, Vancouver's homegrown Abbey of the Long Cedar Canoe (**www.yvrsisters.ca**) now becomes the newest official Mission of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (SPI).

Around about 1976 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, some retired habits from a convent of Roman Catholic nuns were lent to a group of men for their production of "The Sound of Music." The Hills were alive when, three years later, these same habits were resurrected by queer men in the streets of San Francisco's Castro district. Herein lays the inception of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. In 1980, the first Order of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence was created, along with their unique habits, "ear-brassier" wimples, logo and banner for their first official public appearance.

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence reinvent the image of the nun—going beyond the convent walls and the constraints of gender and adding a distinctly queer mix of ministry and activism that embraces those most in need of compassion, sex positive education, spiritual awakening and a good laugh! Members include not only gay men but also folks of every orientation and gender. The one constant is the vow every Sister takes to raise joy and rid the world of guilt and shame.

Their mission is to promulgate universal joy, expiate stigmatic guilt and serve the community. Today, there are 40 Orders of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence throughout the United States, Australia, Colombia, France, Germany, Scotland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Uruguay.

"Most Canadians don't realize that the second SPI House founded after San Francisco was in Toronto, Canada, and that the Sisters played a pivotal role galvanizing the response to the famous 1981 Bathhouse Raids that ignited the gay rights movement in this country," says Sister Merry Peter, a nun for twenty years now living in San Francisco who led missionary efforts in Toronto throughout the 1990s. "But their unique blend of drag, activism and spirituality was ahead of its time and faded from memory as organizations like Act Up, the Metropolitan Community Church and others became more prominent," continues Sr. Merry Peter. "Missionaries continued to work in Canada," she states, "but without a strong convent in a prominent city, most Canadians thought the Sisters were an import from the US."

"The Sisters have a unique role to play in Canada," states Novice Sister Merry Q. Contrary, the Reverend Mother of the Abbey of the Long Cedar Canoe. "Even with all the legal rights for gays and lesbians, Canada is still rather straight. With our wimples, whiteface makeup and facial hair, we're doing our best to make Vancouver more queer, to embrace the beauty of being a freak, and to make it alright to be different."

Vancouver is about to see a whole lot more of the Sisters. Next steps for the Vancouver Mission are to work toward becoming a fully professed house, a process that involves registering with Revenue Canada as a religious charitable organization and hosting six major events, among other requirements. In the meantime, these local queer nuns are busy producing their next fundraiser called Tenting for Homelessness in November. and a very special project with a hot, local artist (details to come). Fans, parishioners and potential members can keep abreast of the group by visiting their website at **www.YVRsisters.ca**, or follow them on Facebook (Vancouver Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence - Abbey of the Long Cedar Canoe). O

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Not That Kind of Girl

~ METTE BACH

Lesbian Math

If my statistics collecting is any indication, you can tell a quality lesbian by the amount of exes she has. A lesbian worth hanging onto is friends with at least 75 percent of her exes. Okay, I'm just saying that because it occurred to me recently that I am friends with three quarters of my exes. Is this lesbian math absurd? Possibly. Is there more of it? Indeed.

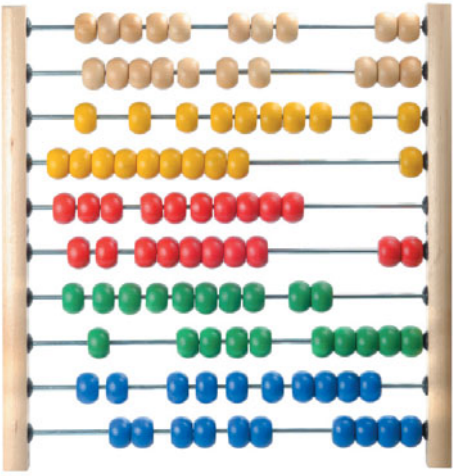
First of all, there is the important question of what constitutes "friendship." Does civility count? My math says "no." Most of us are willing to be civil with strangers. Exes are different. Sure, some of them warrant antagonism; but most of them deserve a lot more than mere politeness.

I once heard that, to get over any relationship, it takes at least half the time that you invested in the relationship. So, if you were with your sweetie for four years, after two years, you might be able to be friends. If you can do it earlier, you're a super-lesbian. If it takes longer, well, you're also human. If there were complications along the way—breeches of trust, for example—the break-up math gets fuzzy.

But let's assume the relationship ended for mutually agreeable, rational or emotionally compatible reasons. If that is the case and the allotted time of bereavement has passed, then friendship can begin.

So, how often does a well-functioning lesbian want to see her exes? Again, it depends. This may not be a matter of quantity but quality. The true test is whether or not the once-coupled lesbians can be alone together for a period of at least one hour without wanting to either have sex or stab each other with forks. If they can, then they are friends. If they can sustain togetherness for over four hours, they are super-lesbians, and if they can handle each other for twenty minutes, well, they are human.

All this math was foreign to me until just a few years ago. I suppose I was still getting over hurts and disappointments and so I found it challenging to be around lesbians who were so cavalier with their exes. The concept seemed foreign to me. After all, when I'd split with boyfriends (in the days of yore), we'd say our goodbyes, return each other's CDs or can openers or books and that would be that. I'll admit that I was jealous of my new lesbian friends. I really wanted to be the kind of person who could say, "I went canoeing with my ex last week and genuinely extol her virtues." It took a long time for me to understand that, while I might want such friendships in theory, in practice I was not ready to do the work to get them.



Luckily for me, that all changed. Before I knew it, I was initiated, one ex-girlfriend at a time, into a sacred club of Sapphic bonds. And now, I wouldn't change that for the world.

The only requirement, really, was a shift in expectations. Where once I might have evaluated my girlfriend based on compatibility as a lover or partner, I had to let go of that and see her for her: a fallible human being with whom I'd shared significant experiences. In return, she would lend me the same sense of patience and understanding.

It was not all that long ago that I ventured into uncharted friendship territory with one of my exes—one who is currently one of my closest friends. We jumped in, feet first, not knowing what to expect. Neither one of us had managed a close connection with an ex before. We were pioneers and I guess that was part of the excitement. What we learned together was that, when we focused on each other's positive qualities, we were fine. On occasion, when we ventured into the murky territory of the reasons for our split, feelings started to hurt and one or both of us would make an excuse to leave. Then we'd both stew on the interaction for a couple of days, call each other and start the process again. We did this a handful of times and, after that, the reasons for our split became fodder for our jokes. So I started to think that the true test of friendship was laughter. If two once-involved lesbians could both have a good, loving and respectful chuckle at the demise of their romantic relationship, they were friends. And so, based on highly scientific data collecting, I concluded that we were friends.

Sharing this news with other lesbians was delightful; but even more delightful was the zeal with which they shared their own mathematical calculations with me. One hilarious dyke friend is convinced that you can't tell if a lesbian is a real lesbian until after the seven-year mark. If a woman goes seven years without sleeping with a man, she's a real lesbian. Until that time, she's still just getting her toes (or whatever) wet.

Why seven years? Who knows? Why do I think a good lesbian is friends with 75 percent of her exes? That's also a mystery. The point is this: move over algebra, there's a new math in town. It isn't always accurate and it doesn't always make sense, but neither do relationships. O

Mette Bach is the author of
Off The Highway: Growing Up in North Delta
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SLAP UPSIDE THE HEAD

~ MARK FROM SLAP

So, I'm getting married in a week. A gay wedding—exciting, right? Canada has, after all, had full, equal marriage rights for five years now. I'm pretty nervous about the whole thing, too. Don't get me wrong. The commitment part is kind of a no-brainer. I'm just worried that if things aren't handled just right, all sorts of grave consequences will hang on my conscience forever.

You see, already it turns out that I've upset a bunch of people. I don't think this was really my fault, mind you. I didn't know that so many strangers felt so passionately about my relationship. A year before we made the wedding plans official, and well after same-sex marriage was legalized nationwide, REAL Women of Canada and the Canada Family Action Coalition had jointly issued a press release announcing that they'd be seeking a national referendum on our marriage. Lots and lots of people that I've never met said that they really don't think my fiance and I are a good match, and we really ought to have asked everyone in Canada before even starting down the marriage path.

I wasn't too keen on the whole referendum thing, personally. We wanted our wedding to be a small, private affair, after all. Nevertheless, a lot of people really wanted a say in the whole event—referendum or not. The year of our proposal, Focus on the Family Canada, the Institute for Canadian Values, and the Canada Family Action Coalition were apparently so displeased with our lack of consultation about the wedding details that they started a lobbying effort toward the order of a royal commission on our marriage. According to a joint release, they needed to assemble a group of commissioners—immune from government intervention—to intimately study my relationship with my fiance.

I guess this one really took me off guard. I thought my fiance and I had given ample thought to formalizing our relationship and commitment; but perhaps we were missing something. A royal commission was pretty serious stuff, after all. There had been only two such commissions launched in Canada in the past decade: one about the Air india bombing, and another about the future of health care.

This was the start of my anxiety. Could something more serious be afoot? If I had to pinpoint the greatest cause of stress, I think it was Conservative MP Harold Albrecht. He really helped me grasp the unintended gravity of our plans. Our wedding, he declared on record, "will succeed in wiping out an entire society in just one generation."

All society? I'm honestly not sure what detail I could have overlooked to cause such a disaster. Was the frosting that we had selected for our wedding cupcakes too bold a colour, capable of sparking a cascading, mass seizure—wherein one guest would be thrown into epileptic fits so grotesque that all those within view would share the same fate? Maybe the outdoor location we had chosen was part of a sensitive ecosystem, exposing important phytoplanktons to extinction risk, collapsing earth's food chain from the bottom up? Or maybe we had inadvertently planned the greatest wedding ever—an event so perfect that it ended the tradition of marriage completely, removing the only construct capable of ensuring the continuation of human reproduction (according to some).

This seemed a little far fetched; but what else could our small, local wedding do to result in such horrifying consequences? All these lobby groups seemed so sure, and were wasting no expense in trying to stop me from getting married.

Luckily, Bishop Fred Henry of Calgary offered a hint to help me pinpoint what the source of the problem could be. My upcoming wedding, he announced to a forum called "Let's Talk About Children's Rights," was "the worst betrayal of children's rights I've ever seen; even more so than the Catholic church sex scandals."

Children! How could I have missed it? This was truly a disaster, and I fear that all of it was, indeed, my fault. Having approved one of our reception's meal options without having tried it first, I couldn't be certain that the dish wasn't, in fact, children. It seems like an odd choice for the restaurant to have offered me in the first place; but I suppose I should have asked what was in the Succulent Rack of Soylent Chops before deciding upon it. And now, with only a week to go, I can't make any changes or substitutions. I can only hope that informing our guests that one of the meal options is made of children will deter them from selecting it. If this averts the impending disaster, and I hope it will, surely these lobby groups will finally lay off on their attempts to stop my wedding. O

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~ DAVID KING

Canadian Trailblazers

Murray Billet

It's been almost two decades since Delwin Vriend was fired from Kings College for being gay. After seven years, his case changed history when the Supreme Court ruled that provincial governments could not exclude queers from human rights legislation. That created a legal precedent impacting everything from labour relations to same-sex marriage. The hype led to Vriend's decision to leave Canada, but the ex-pat's contributions are clearly endless.

Like Vriend, conflict resolution specialist Murray Billet has made his own contributions to Alberta's LGBTQ community, and it was Billet who was by Vriend's side as council advisor and media contact for the circus that was Vriend v. Alberta.

"It was such a crazy time," recalls Billet, "and we had to take on a province that didn't want to give us equal rights; so we had to find more people to get connected. I am not sure how we did that. All that pro bono work—we're talking about hundreds and thousands of [legal] dollars. Fortunately I had one of the best communications firms behind me to get me primped and ready for the camera."

When Billet moved to Alberta with his boyfriend, he had already campaigned for North America's first out mayor, Glenn Murray. Suddenly he needed to be discreet just to rent an apartment. Handling labour relations for the United Nurses of Alberta, Billet has since served as board member for EGALE and HIV Edmonton, as Director for Gay and Lesbian Awareness (GALA), and as Edmonton representative for Canadians for Equal Marriage. But it was chairing the Edmonton Police Commission that redefined his life.

"It was the early 1990s when I started getting involved as a liaison with the police and the gay community," reflects Billet, "and to build that trust from the top down takes time. I think the sooner minority groups can learn to hold hands, the sooner we can walk through the door, hand in hand together."

Billet's police work unexpectedly led to a nomination as Police Commissioner in 2004. It was a title that the 6'4", 220 lb. activist admits he couldn't take seriously.

"I was approached by a couple of people to put my name in and I burst out laughing," says Billet. "Let's face it, I am a left-leaning, very out gay guy that doesn't mince his words when it comes to doing the right thing. So I chose to put my name in just to let them know that there were other choices out there."

Billet was sunning it up on the Blue Chairs in Puerta Vallarta when he got his interview. The gracious hotel owner quickly fixed him up with an office for a long-distance call, and when he returned from PV, he got the congratulatory call from the Mayor.

"I think it was a good choice on many levels," says Billet. "I had the opportunity to show our police service what our community is all about. I remember one of the senior officers coming to me to ask me about the 'gay agenda'. So I told him that every morning when I leave my condo, I want to look fabulous. I mean c'mon, if I were Asian would I have an 'Asian Agenda'? A light went on right away."

Billet has paid close attention over the years to hate crimes and gaybashing, including two assaults during Edmonton's 2005 Pride Week that were on the heels of the debate over same-sex marriage. Strengthening Edmonton's hate crimes unit, providing sensitivity training and conducting workshops on workplace homophobia, he's put all his HR, labour relations and conflict management skills to good use.

"In 2004, the GLBTQ community suffered the most crimes against them as an identified group," says Billet, "followed closely by members of the Jewish community [that switched in 2005]. It is a fact that women are still earning less than men, racism still thrives and homophobia is still a reality. When I look at what's going on in Vancouver, gaybashing is a regular occurrence, and I don't think it's any different in Edmonton. It's one of Canada's fourth or fifth most violent cities. But, statistically, it's gone down."

Still vocal on more recent issues such as Bill 44 (proposed in 2009 to give parents the right to pull their kids from classes on sexuality, sexual orientation and religion), Billet has advocated for a controlled, wet shelter experiment in Edmonton where homeless could be allowed to drink (not unlike a self-injection site in Vancouver), spoken out on violence that erupted at the CFL Eskimos training camp, and intervened on nursing misconduct and police internal affairs. Through it all, he's even stopped to welcome newbies to Edmonton's queer community with a cup of java.

Redefining retired, Billet's taken off his hats to focus on his own needs; but it hasn't stopped him from supporting Camp Fyrefly, Canada's only summer camp for queer youth, with goals of establishing a national board to pitch Fyrefly tents from coast to coast As Billet helps set up camps for queer youth, he also tackling their apathy.

"How we get youth involved is the six million dollar question," says Billet. "Part of it is having them understand the power they have. The real work is in the schools, in the family, when a dad or kid comes out, or someone comes out at work, but where the gay stuff can seem irrelevant…I have always maintained that you can't get the gay card until you get involved. With $5 a month, or $20 a year, can you imagine what we could do?"

"Conflict is opportunity turned inside out," adds Billet, who has faced his share of what he calls a "piss mist" of Albertans saying things they often don't mean. Sympathetic to Vriend for leaving Alberta and Canada, his own two feet are quite firmly planted at home.

"When I think of the Vriend case," Billet points out, "it brings up some of the most powerful emotions that could ever bubble up in a person—the hate mail and police watching our homes. I was a single dad at the time. But what a dream team…I remember meeting with Stockwell Day, pre-Vriend case, on human rights, and disagreeing to a point where he hung up on me—until later, when he had to send me letters addressed to 'Commissioner Billet.'"

For more information on Camp Fyrefly, visit **http://www.fyrefly.ualberta.ca**. O

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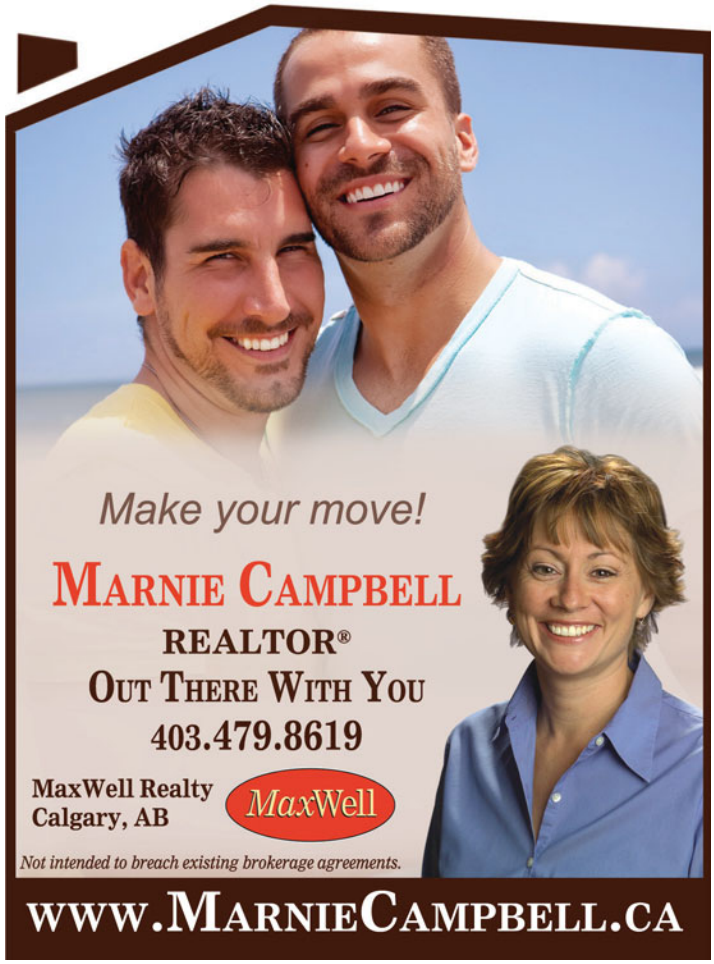
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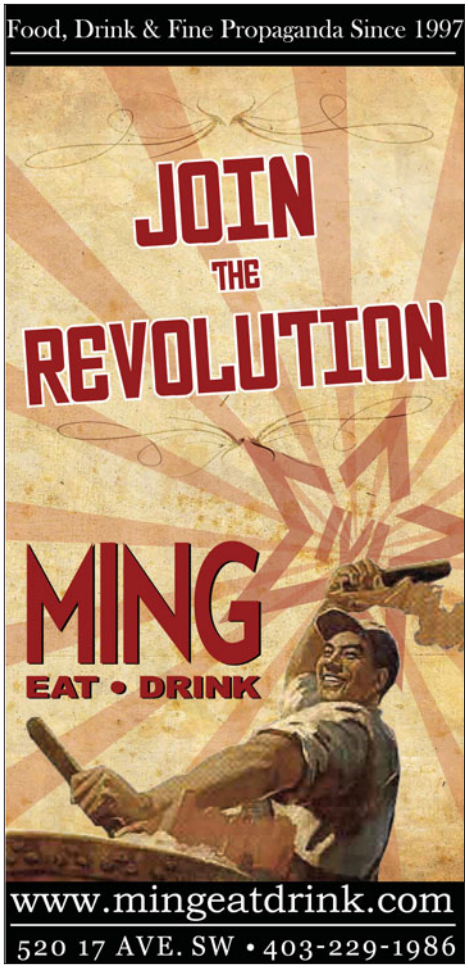
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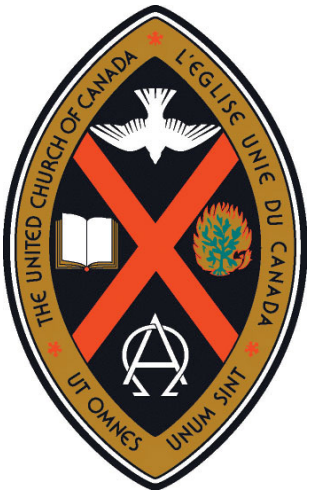
Is There a Religious Left in Canadian Politics?



The history of religion and politics in Canada is surprisingly closer than most of us might think. After all, it was compromises over things like protected Catholic and Protestant education in the constitution that allowed for the creation of Canada in the first place. And then there are the political figures.

Take Tommy Douglas and William Aberhart: Both were Baptist preachers, both premiers. In Saskatchewan, Douglas became the father of Canadian healthcare, and, later, the leader of the federal NDP. Across the border in Alberta, Premier Aberhart was known for his fire-and-brimstone radio broadcasts, while his Social Credit government tried to wrest control of the province's banks, and created the Alberta Treasury Branch as a result.

A book that has made waves in Canadian circles lately was Marci McDonald's *The Armageddon Factor*, which looked at the influence of right-wing "Christian nationalists" in Canadian politics. But, is there a corresponding religious "left" in Canada?

"I'd say the reality is that the political activism of the mainline churches, which is what I tend to call them, has always been much more subtle and much more generally consistent, and had more of a resonance with mainline Canadian politics," says gay Liberal MP Rob Oliphant.

Oliphant is an ordained United Church minister who entered and won the Toronto riding of Don Valley West in the 2008 election.

"What we would do historically, since the 1920s, is push gently in ensuring that social causes and social concerns were never overwhelmed by more economic concerns or more business concerns," Oliphant says. "That's been the role of the United Church for years, and pressing on issues like women's inclusion, like apartheid in South Africa, like rights for labour unions, and obviously gay marriage and gender justice issues—those kinds of things."

Oliphant says that this has always been more of a "massaging process" than it has been importing ideas from an outside culture. He equates the evangelical right as being an American construct.

NDP MP Bill Siksay was also studying to be a United Church minister; but his ordination process was never completed because it was at a time before the church was ordaining gay men. Nevertheless, he draws a link between his faith and his politics.

"My politics and my religious beliefs have always been closely related, and I think that, in many ways, my fundamental beliefs about humanity and about the universe can't be separated from my politics," Siksay says. "As a young person, I grew up in the United Church of Canada, where I often heard first about movements for social justice and political change in Canada. I didn't often necessarily hear about those from political parties or from political activists—but I heard about it from social justice activists in the church."

While both Oliphant and Siksay are adamant that they keep church and state separate, and for good reason, Siksay does believe that there is still an element of the social gospel roots of the NDP still in action today.

"There is a faith and social justice caucus that's active in the NDP, and that's been organized in the last few years," Siksay says. "In fact, one of its roots came out of the debate on same-sex marriage. Some members of

caucus were ostracized by their own religious communities for the stand they took in support of same-sex marriage. They personally felt that they needed to put their own personal religious beliefs and their political activism back together again, and have a place where that was discussed and understood by people who had similar experiences.

"That's always been a feature of the NDP since its foundation, and its predecessor party the CCF, where people often struggled with how to express their religious commitments politically."

The influence of the United Church in Canadian politics has a particularly strong connection with the queer community. Not only are Siksay and Oliphant involved, but Liberal MP Scott Brison often speaks about getting married in the same United Church where he was baptized and taught Sunday school. And Conservative Senator Nancy Ruth was an ordained United Church minister at one point.

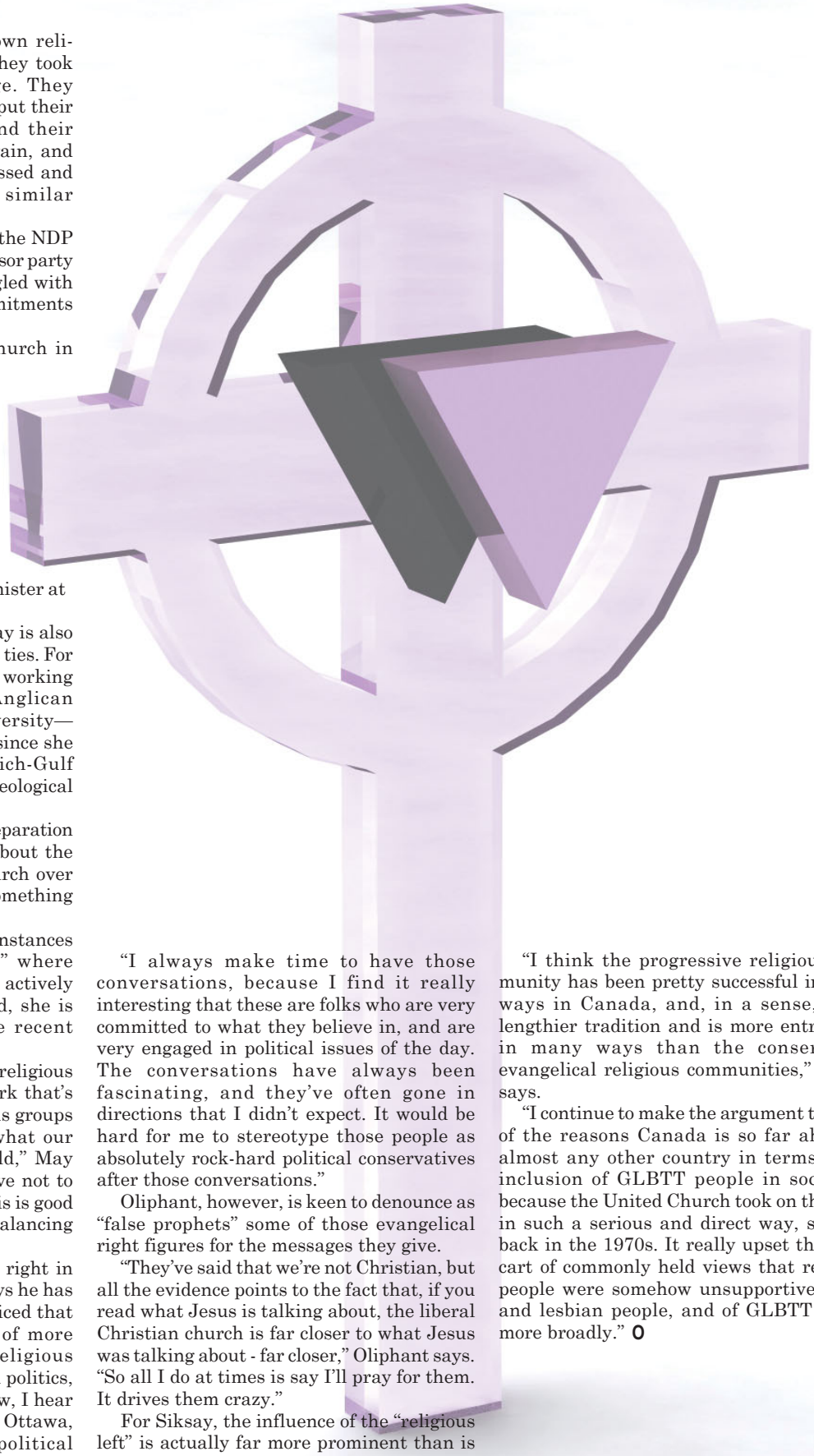
Green Party leader Elizabeth May is also a political actor with strong religious ties. For the past several years, she has been working toward being ordained as an Anglican minister through St. Paul's University—although, this is currently on hold since she has moved to the riding of Saanich-Gulf Islands, as there are no nearby theological schools.

After her own caveats about the separation of church and state, May speaks about the current divide in the Anglican Church over the blessing of same-sex unions—something she's on the side of supporting.

While May is concerned about instances of what she calls "bad theology," where certain right-wing evangelists are actively excited about the end of the world, she is nevertheless heartened by some recent moves.

"Where I find a lot of the current religious movements very exciting is the work that's being done by churches and religious groups around the world to figure out what our relationship is to the natural world," May says "and what obligations we have not to destroy the planet that we're on. This is good and appropriate theology, counterbalancing some of the craziness."

The influence of the evangelical right in politics is something that Siksay says he has noticed some change with. "I've noticed that young people who are members of more conservative or evangelical religious communities have a new interest in politics, and I think that, more regularly now, I hear from them in my own riding and in Ottawa, asking for meetings to discuss political issues." Siksay says.



"I always make time to have those conversations, because I find it really interesting that these are folks who are very committed to what they believe in, and are very engaged in political issues of the day. The conversations have always been fascinating, and they've often gone in directions that I didn't expect. It would be hard for me to stereotype those people as absolutely rock-hard political conservatives after those conversations."

Oliphant, however, is keen to denounce as "false prophets" some of those evangelical right figures for the messages they give.

"They've said that we're not Christian, but all the evidence points to the fact that, if you read what Jesus is talking about, the liberal Christian church is far closer to what Jesus was talking about - far closer," Oliphant says. "So all I do at times is say I'll pray for them. It drives them crazy."

For Siksay, the influence of the "religious left" is actually far more prominent than is usually given credit.

"I think the progressive religious community has been pretty successful in many ways in Canada, and, in a sense, has a lengthier tradition and is more entrenched in many ways than the conservative evangelical religious communities," Siksay says.

"I continue to make the argument that one of the reasons Canada is so far ahead of almost any other country in terms of the inclusion of GLBTT people in society is because the United Church took on the issue in such a serious and direct way, starting back in the 1970s. It really upset the apple cart of commonly held views that religious people were somehow unsupportive of gay and lesbian people, and of GLBTT people more broadly." O

Don't Just Stand There…
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We all face obstacles in our daily lives and there's only one way to come to terms with them: Meet them head-on. And here at **OUTLOOKS** we're challenging YOU and all Canadians to come out and help us confront the challenges that HIV poses to individuals and communities across the country.

Local AIDS service organizations (ASOs) are community-based resources that help people living with HIV/AIDS navigate the obstacles of day-to-day living through a variety of prevention, care, treatment and support programs and services. With approximately 65,000 people living with HIV in Canada, these organizations can use your help. So don't just stand there…make a difference by participating in the Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life. You can walk or sponsoring an individual or a walk team in your community.

Canadians are still becoming Unnecessarily Infected

HIV/AIDS researchers, health-care professionals, AIDS service organizations and AIDS activists in Vienna for the XVIII International AIDS Conference revealed statistics that, even in Canada, an affluent country where many treatments are accessible without cost, people are still becoming unnecessarily infected with HIV and falling ill, without being linked to treatment.

"It is incredible that Aboriginal babies are being born with HIV when free treatment exists to prevent mother-to-child transmission," says Denise Lambert of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. In 2008, the new infection rate among Aboriginal persons was 3.6 times higher than among non-Aboriginal persons in Canada. National HIV estimates also indicate that two thirds of all new HIV infections among Aboriginal people in 2008 were attributable to injection drug use, a proportion considerably higher than the 17 percent of overall new HIV infections in this category.

Another grim reality is the infection rate among young people in Canada. "Young people are very vulnerable, especially young women," says Jessica Whitbread, the Under 30 North American Rep for the International Community of Women with HIV. In 2008, young women between 15 and 19 years of age represented over half of all HIV-positive test reports in this age group.

Stigma and discrimination also make it difficult for new Canadians to be linked to appropriate care. Marvelous Muchenje of Women's Health in Women's Hands reports that "the estimated new infection rate among individuals from HIV-endemic countries is about 8.5 times higher than among other Canadians."

The Canadian government needs to act with appropriate funding being allocated in the HIV strategy to remove the barriers at the root of this problem, including educational programs, affordable housing, and adequate access to healthcare regardless of where you live.

An AIDS Cure is Worth the Hunt

For every person who receives treatment—which must continue over their entire lifetime—about three new people become infected. It is simply not possible to "treat" our way out of this disease.

The United Nations' goal to expand antiretroviral treatment from five million to 15 million people in developing countries is laudable. One of the themes of the 18th International AIDS Conference, is that treatment is a powerful "double agent" that simultaneously saves lives, and prevents new infections.

Equally important, however, are the quest for an AIDS vaccine and the search for a cure.

As the global recession causes donor countries to falter on committing to adequate financing, and Canada regretfully is no exception, the case needs to be made to support the efforts to search for ways to eradicate the virus.

Antiretroviral drugs are extremely good at suppressing HIV; but in some individuals, the virus becomes resistant to drugs, and the therapy ceases to be effective. As well, drug therapy can never rid the body entirely of the virus, which lurks in certain cellular reservoirs, even when the patient appears to be in perfect health.

Scientists have long tried to develop a vaccine to prevent AIDS, but have made only marginal progress. It is a challenge because of the virus's high mutation rate. One hopeful breakthrough occurred recently with the publication in the Journal Science of Research. It identified two antibodies in an HIV-positive individual which, when put together, block 90 percent of the HIV strains. The next step will be to try to inject that part of the virus into an individual to produce a protective response against HIV infection.

Then there is the search for a cure. The American Foundation for AIDS Research established in May an innovative consortium of multidisciplinary scientists who will search for a cure to eliminate HIV from the body, and for an understanding of the viral reservoirs where the disease lurks. One researcher is focusing on the case of a leukemia patient in Berlin, who appears to have been cured of HIV after a stem cell transplant. The donor had a genetic mutation that rendered him and his recipient resistant to HIV.

These exciting breakthroughs may take many years to become therapeutic realities or a cure. In the meantime, donors must continue to fund tried-and-true prevention, treatment and support programs at both the national and local levels.

***One such way you can show your support is the Scotia Bank Aids Walk for Life* (www.aidswalkforlife.ca).**

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Renovation File

with Maciek Mika

The Starter Tool Box

A lot of reality television is being dedicated to art of the DIY Project. But, really, how many people are interested in flipping a house or willing to risk a disaster? Unless you want Mike Holmes storming in on you, the trick is knowing when to DIY and when NOT to DIY. This column is dedicated to just that. Over the coming months, I'll share tips on how you can add value to your home, make it your own and avoid catastrophe.

I thought it appropriate for my first article in OUTLOOKS to keep it simple and share with you the essential pieces for your starter tool kit. Whether you're a Jack- or Jill-of-all-trades or a rookie handyperson (I'll do my best to keep it gender-neutral), it's always a good idea to have a stash of tools on standby. You never know when a small project is going to creep up on you, and calling an expert in gets expensive fast.

1. The world's oldest tool: The hammer. Sounds simple enough, right? It is. But, consider what you'll be using it for. If it's simply for hanging and removing pictures, a lightweight claw hammer will suffice. If you think you might want to take on a larger job down the road, get something more substantial. You might also consider a rubber mallet, if you're planning on putting together a lot of your own furniture.

2. Screw it. The sky is the limit when it comes to screwdrivers. Set yourself up with a basic six- or eight-piece set to start, and add to it as you go. To save your strength for other tasks, put a cordless drill on your Christmas list.

3. Measure twice. A 25-foot measuring tape will save your sanity. Accurate measurement is the cornerstone of any DIY job from creating accurate cuts to centring a picture on the wall. A level will also come in handy in your kit. Start with one that has a bubble as an indicator.

4. Safety first. If you're working with potentially hazardous materials like glass or spray paint, safety goggles are a must. Even in dusty environments, you should still make a habit of wearing some not-so-stylish safety goggles. Your eyes will thank you. I also like having a good pair of gloves in reach, in case I need to grab split wood, broken glass or even weeds in the garden.

5. Pliers. Once you're game for basic plumbing, woodworking or renovation jobs, you'll need a couple of pairs of pliers. They're your go-to device for projects requiring you to cut, bend, grip or strip wire. They're also really good to pinch your partner with. O

You can win this tool box by visiting the crew from Essential Renovations at the Pride Calgary street fair on Sunday, September 5.

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I LOVE YOU PHILLIP MORRIS

What had potential to be the gayest thing ever to hit a Cineplex near you is now shelved for release, with no signs of movement. *I Love You Phillip Morris* has been taunting gay moviegoers for almost two years now, with only a few vidcaps of Jim and Ewan locking lips for fans to feed off (or what-you-will). Well, the lesbians got Kids, so it's about time someone offered up some answers for the mos. Let's get to the bottom of this (...that's definitely, what he said).

It all started back at Sundance (like any good tale of heartache and intrigue begins). On the heels of *Brokeback*, *Transamerica* and *Milk* of recent years past, writer-directors Glenn Ficarra and John Requa brought us *I Love You Phillip Morris*, a biopic about one Mr. Steven Jay Russell (played by Jim Carrey). Initial production was funded by a company called EuropaCorp. (I trust this will be significant later.) After its completion and festival screenings in early 2009, distributors Consolidated Pictures Group came onboard in May to take charge of release. That was more than a year ago. So, where's this Phillip guy? Cause I've got my popcorn ready!

Maybe it's a terrible movie, you question? *Phillip* premiered at Sundance to (relative) acclaim, and critics (those who have had the privilege of even seeing it) seem to agree on its cinematic merit. It's the story of Morris (Ewan McGregor, that is), who is the object of Russell's (Carrey's) affection. The film's a dark comedy, loosely based on the true story of Russell, a real-life convict whose claim to fame is having broken out of prison (four freaking times!). The story centres largely on his jailbreaking ways, but begins when he was a simple family man living in Georgia.

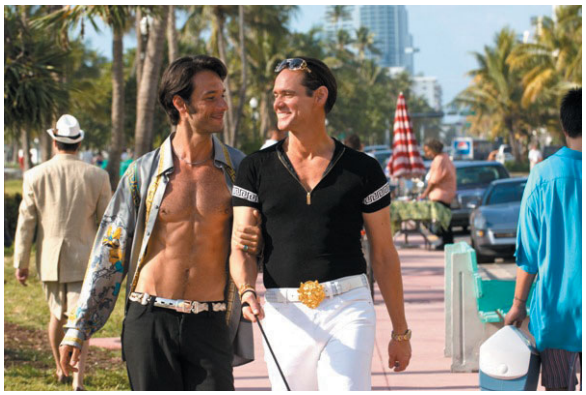
A respected police officer, an organist at the local church, a father of two and a happily married man (to the hilarious Leslie Mann), Russell starts off the story leading a so-called normal life. Then, a violent car accident puts Russell in a coma. After he wakes, having come so close to death, Russell is forced to confront his fears of immortality. Suddenly, he leaves his wife and kids and vows to pursue his true, authentic self: Russell turns gay.

In Act 2, our new antihero moves to Miami, meets new boyfriend Rodrigo Santoro (sweet damn—Google image this guy) and begins a new chapter as an overtly camp gay man, living an absurdly lavish lifestyle. Russell soon discovers, however, that "being gay is

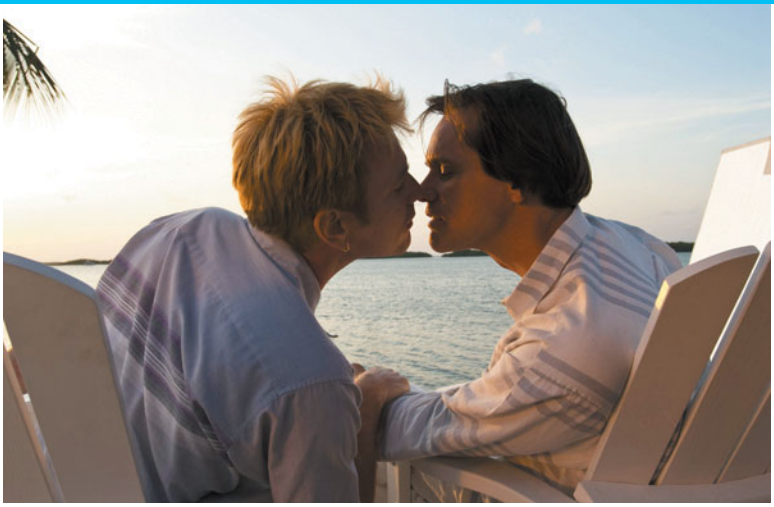
really expensive." He turns to conmanning in order to afford his luxurious tastes. Steven's extraordinary and increasingly complex escapades, however, quickly land him in the big house. Cue inmate McGregor, the sultry southern title role. A love affair blossoms between Phillip and Steven Jay, full of absurdity, love and criminal schemes—all we can really ever hope for in life.

Sounds like there's commercial viability here, no? So why, then, do we find ourselves four pushed-back release dates later (February 12, March 26, April 30 and July 30 to count) with still no shows in North American theatres? Well, this is where we break into two camps of skepticism. First up: the gay martyrs. There are those who believe that an offbeat, endearing, uniquely told story with an A-list cast would be expected to rush into box offices for mass release. The only logical explanation that it has not been released, then, is its "lack of widespread appeal" (i.e., *Brokeback* was a fluke, and every other gay-based Hollywood movie is destined to an exclusive shelf life in the "other" section at Blockbuster).

Not true, martyrs. Case and point: this summer's box office success *The Kids Are Alright*. With complex storylines, lesbian protagonists and queer family values at the core, one might ponder the film's mainstream appeal. However, it received rave reviews at January, 2010's Sundance premiere (see? Every good story...). Then, this summer, when it opened in limited release at merely seven theatres in North America, it managed to gross an astounding $491,971 in its first weekend. It broke records, and, for a short while, it was the highest average grossing film of 2010. Curse you *Inception* [wave of the fist]! Regardless, *The Kids Are* indeed, *Alright*.



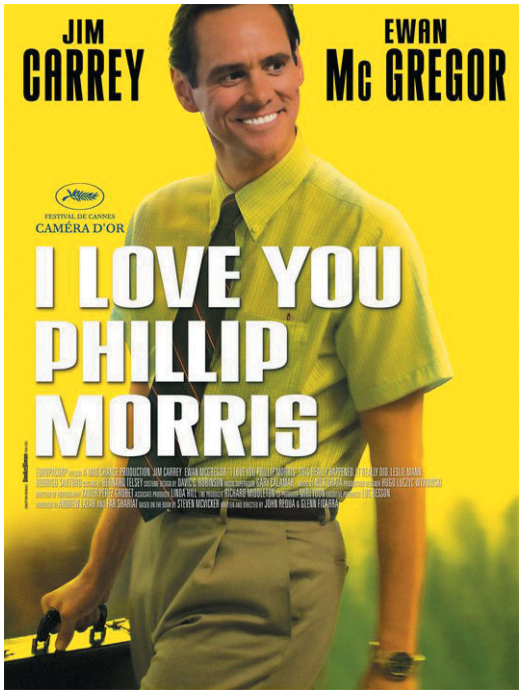
So how does *Phillip* still not have a steady release date? Well, rumour has it that there's a lawsuit (dun dun dun). Camp two believes legal issues are the real reason Jim and Ewan are being kept out of theatres. EuropaCorp (the aforementioned production company) is suing Consolidated Pictures (the distributors) for supposedly violating their initial agreement (alleging breach of contract and copyright infringement —[MH4] apologies for boring jargon). The moral: they are battling over payments right now (over $3 million), and in the meantime, its North American premiere has been postponed by Californian Court Judge Dale Fischer (says the ever-trusted Hollywood Reporter). Apparently, EuropaCorp wants to have Newmarket Films come in to take over distribution.



Are you still skeptical? Good, because I am. CPG's co-founder Timothy Patrick Cavanaugh denied everything I've just told you in a recent interview with Deadline: "We're the distributors right now, we have a contract. If we need to go to arbitration, we will. We plan to distribute this film." However, there's been a mysterious disappearance of the film's official website PhillipMorrisTheMovie.com, which was once operated by CPG in its initial distribution campaign. What does this all mean?

Who cares? I'm halfway through my bag of popcorn and there's still no movie about to start. Regardless of why it hasn't hit theatres yet, there is still hope it might—and soon. My Nancy Drew Jr. Detective skills led me to Jim Carrey Online (an unofficial fan site devoted to the actor) that, at press time, reports Phillip's release date as October, 2010. This reigns true on IMDB.com as well, and Tribute.ca says it's "coming soon." Well, one should hope so. After all this hype and unnecessary drama, the real Steven Russell sits patiently behind bars. Let's hope his life sentence doesn't run out first.

Do you think there's popcorn in prison? **O**



Randall on the Road

Travel Editor Randall Shirley on his annual theatre trip to NYC, June 2010. Photo: Randall Shirley

Drama and Booze: wherever you live or travel

This month's travel section is devoted to two things most gays seem to love: lots of drama and plenty of booze. And while I hope you'll take advantage of a seat sale and go to NYC for theatre or visit the magical and unique wineries Forrest Johnston suggests, I'm aware that not everyone is able to jet across the country or the world at the drop of a hat.

The term "staycation" has worn out its welcome over the past couple of years (frankly, I'm ready to jet, jet, jet!), but if you're not in a position to travel to NYC for this season's shows or to the wine regions Forrest talks about, consider the options you have in both those genres *wherever you travel*, and even where you live.

If like so many Canadian gays, you reside in or have reason to frequent the Toronto area, plan in an overnighter for Niagara-on-the-Lake's Shaw Festival or to Stratford for their magnificent festival (both run well into autumn). In Toronto itself, excellent musicals are running under the Mirvish banner—how could you miss *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*? In other Canadian cities, many of us have access to the solid productions brought in by Broadway Across Canada. This season's touring musicals include nuggets like *Legally Blonde*, *Cats*, and *Mamma Mia!* Of course, local universities and professional local theatres do amazing work, too.

As for wine tasting, those of us living in, or visiting, British Columbia and Ontario have an embarrassment of choices, including some closer-to-city than you may realize. Vancouverites, for example, are under an hour away from some surprisingly good, fun wine tasting in the Fraser Valley (Remember: a designated driver or cab is a *must* for wine tastings).

I've always said theatre is a journey for the mind, and for wine-lovers, a few sips of the stuff can be a journey for the senses. Wherever you're going, I hope you'll stop and enjoy two of the things gay travellers seem to love.

Bowl me over in Toronto

Polish up your bowling shoes and set your iron to polyester, and book a trip to Toronto during IGBO's 2011 gay bowling festivities. Organizers expect gay and lesbian bowlers from around the world, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United

States to attend the International Gay Bowling Organization (IGBO) 31st Annual Tournament in Toronto from May 25-30, 2011. And check the weight of your balls...you know how the air-lines are about overweight bags. **www.igbo2011.org**.

Travel Insurance Alert!!!

If you haven't been paying attention, Canadian airline Aeropro (a small Québec player) recently went out of business, and major Mexican airline Mexicana may not be around much longer, they've already cancelled most of their Canada flights. Especially as the holidays come along and many of us plan wintertime getaways, it's good to talk with a travel agent about the various types of travel interruption and cancellation insurance. Make sure you know what you're covered for in every possible situation. If the airline goes under, who will get you home? Also, check with your credit card company to see what services they cover, and know the terms.

Miami Spice

God knows we gays love to eat. While many destinations do their "dine-out" month during winter months, gay-fave destination Miami does theirs it in their "low" season...now. Through Sept. 30 Greater Miami's finest restaurants offer three course prix fixe lunches, at $22 per person, and dinners at $35 (+ taxes and gratuities). Each menu includes an appetizer, entrée and dessert offering an average discount of 30-50% off regular price. **www.ILoveMiamiSpice.com**.

Win a trip to Richmond

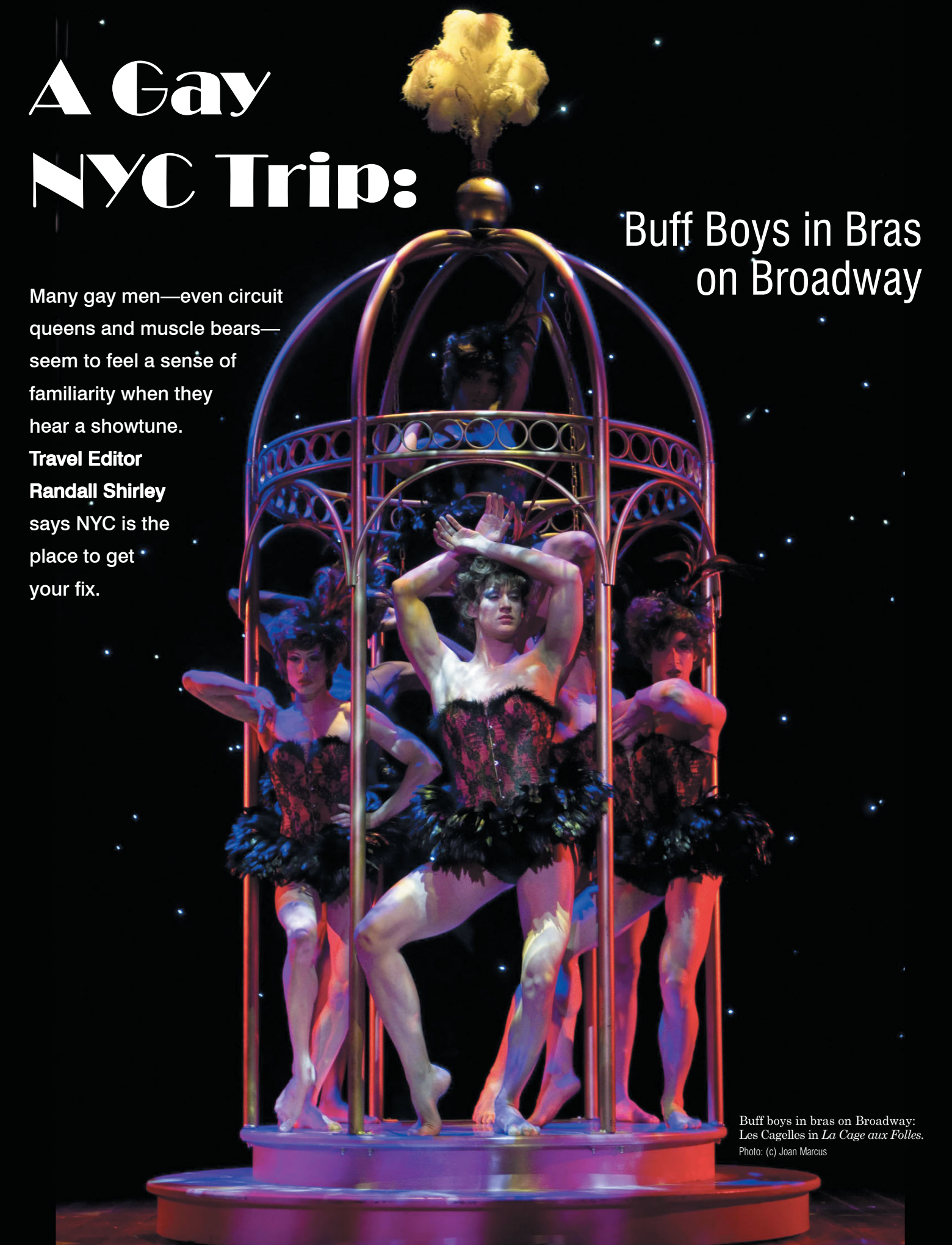
(they'll let you go play in ancouver, too).

Richmond, British Columbia, is giving away a trip to their fair city which is home to more interesting travel options than most people realize, including some of the planet's finest Asian cuisine, the Olympic speed skating oval-which is now a public gym and fitness facility, and the seaside fishing village of Steveston. Of course, Richmond's a stone's throw from Whistler/Vancouver, so if you win one of the four prizes there are a zillion ways to make it a great, gay trip (Whistler Gay Ski Week, anyone)? See rules and enter at **www.allinrichmond.com**.

A Gay NYC Trip:

Buff Boys in Bras on Broadway

Many gay men—even circuit queens and muscle bears—seem to feel a sense of familiarity when they hear a showtune. **Travel Editor Randall Shirley** says NYC is the place to get your fix.



Buff boys in bras on Broadway: Les Cagelles in *La Cage aux Folles*.
Photo: (c) Joan Marcus

Gay for play: Douglas Hodge won the 2010 Best Actor Tony as Albin/ZaZa in Broadway's *La Cage Aux Folles*. You should not miss it.
Photo: (c) Joan Marcus

There are buff boys in bras on Broadway. Twenty seven years after it gave the gay community the stirring anthem "These Are The Best of Times" and the torch song "I Am What I Am," the musical *La Cage Aux Folles* is back. And no matter how many drag queens you've seen do either (or both) of those tunes, no one does a showtune like a Broadway performer. No pit orchestra sounds quite as perfect as the musicians on Broadway.

You have a lot of reasons to visit New York; a *lot*. And yet I'm surprised at how many Canadian gays tell me they've never visited the Greatest City in the World (sorry Toronto, love ya, but…). Some of you tell me you couldn't afford it (you can), others tell me The City scares you (it shouldn't), and others simply say you don't know where to begin (read on!).

NYC has many distractions, including about a zillion hot gay men on every block. But no single distraction (or attraction) is more central to understanding the New York dream than seeing a Broadway musical. Thousands of wanna-be actors, singers, and dancers pour into the city each year. Most of them won't make it; the cream of American theatrical talent rises to the top for you and me to enjoy.

How to research your shows in advance. This is easier than it may sound! The best place to learn about what's currently playing and coming up is Playbill.com. *Playbill* is the small magazine you receive at each Broadway show, with several pages being the program of that specific show. Their website is loaded with info about what's happening in NYC theatre. There's a synopsis of every on- and off-Broadway show (terms which refer to the number of seats in a theatre, not its address). Playbill is also useful place for learning what big-name stars are currently appearing in, or about to leave, a show.

Before I shell out close-to $100 for a Broadway ticket I also use the *New York Times'* site where Ben Brantley and Charles Isherwood (since last summer) review every open show. Brantley is, perhaps, the most-powerful gay man in theatrical show business; his words have *closed* many shows. I don't always agree with him or Charles, but I do like to know what they thought.

What should you see now on Broadway? It's been rough, but I've managed to see almost every major Broadway musical over the past 15 years, most-recently in June 2010. *La Cage* is a must-see, as long as Douglas Hodge is playing the role of Albin/ZaZa. *Frasier*'s Kelsey Grammer, as Georges, may be the star power that packs the house, but Hodge, a straight actor from London, is divine. When dressed as a man, he exudes a tender vulnerability that so many gays try to hide; then as a woman, he's a powerhouse of poise and power. He, a straight man playing gay, *earned* his 2010 Best Actor Tony Award for this role.

Promises, Promises, starring *Will & Grace*'s Sean Hayes and *Glee*'s Kristin Chenowith is also a worthy 180 minutes, with the reverse situation of *La Cage*: Sean is a gay man playing straight, and equally convincingly. He's grown up since his *W&G* days, and who knew the guy could sing? Sing he can. Of course, Broadway followers knew Chenowith before *Glee*—most likely from your *Wicked* soundtracks where she originated the role of Glinda the Good. *Promises* is a fun, retro romp (music by Burt Bacharach) through office love affairs in the 1960s.

To round out the perfect Broadway trip (for me it requires at least 5 musicals), you should also see *Billy Elliott*, *In the Heights* (featuring *American Idol*'s Jordin Sparks through Nov. 14), *Memphis* (2010 Best New Musical Tony), and/or *Next to Normal*.

Like all things gay, Broadway is constantly waffling between reinvention and tradition. It's not *always* about "boom-chuck' show-tunes. *Next to Normal*, a rock-score musical about mental illness, drives the genre to a new level of storytelling—and with great success: it's been playing since March 2009. *Fela!*, another musical which attempts to expand the Broadway genre, is attracting a whole new audience—African Americans for whom its history resonates. It's heavy on African rythms and dancing, but woefully short on storyline—the crux of great theatre, musical or not.

Buy discount Broadway before you travel. Full price for a good orchestra seat (that's the main floor) is now a whopping $125. Same-day half price tickets may be available at the famous TKTS Booth in the middle of Time's Square, but you can often save 25-50% buy purchasing in advance through Playbill.com (you'll need to join their "club," it's free) or BroadwayBox.com. Super-popular shows like *Billy Elliot*, *Lion King*, *Wicked*, and *Jersey Boys* are not available at discount.

Same-day Broadway tickets are available for many shows at the rebuilt TKTS booth in Time's Square. Photo: Jen Davis

Straight for play: openly gay Sean Hayes is remarkable as a straight businessman in love with gay-fave diva Kristin Chenowith in *Promises, Promises*. Photo: (c) Joan Marcus

The famous towers of Midtown Manhattan.
Photo: Ben Dwork

Go to Hell...stay, eat, and drink in the right neighbourhood

While the neighbourhood of Chelsea has done a fine job of making us think it's New York's gay village, most of Manhattan is, in fact, very gay. Midtown, where most of the skyscrapers stand, is also home to the theatre district. Hotels there tend to be exorbitantly priced, and nearby food choices are galling (TGI Fridays, Applebee's). And almost nobody lives there.

Hugging midtown and the theatre district to the west is Hell's Kitchen, a once-nasty neighbourhood that has been gentrified over the past 15 years. Loads of gays live there, and it is sliced through by 9th Avenue, where you'll find scores of *great* eateries—many of them ethnic—at surprisingly affordable prices. You can easily eat on 9th and walk to any Broadway theatre in about 15 minutes. My faves include Mexican at Arriba Arriba, Middle-Eastern tastes at The Hummus Kitchen, chic Italian at Bocca di Bacco, and burgers or salads at insanely popular 5 Napkin Burger. Earlier in the day, you owe it to yourself to nosh on New York's best sticky buns from Amy's bakery.

For most travellers, the single-biggest challenge with any NYC trip is affordable accommodation. One solution, 414 Hotel, allows you to stay right in the middle of Hell's Kitchen, often for around $200/night, and sometimes as low as $150. It's 3-star, clean, chic-enough, and super-friendly. 414 has a couple of tables on their 46th street patio, and several more in an intimate courtyard that beg to be used for morning coffee (and that Amy's bun), or just to fire up your iPad and send e-postcards to your mom. I've stayed in a lot of NYC hotels and even apartments from Craigslist; for the price and neighbourhood 414 has become my favorite.

The Hell's Kitchen area includes plenty of gay things to do later at night, too. A long-time fave is the funky piano bar Don't Tell Mamma's, where aspiring Broadway performers are both bartenders and singers. I've sometimes seen big name Broadway talent in this bar chilling out after a show. Other options include a handful of bars all in walking distance. I've met friendly locals at Vlada, and enjoyed checking out Therapy and The Ritz, too.

Since Hell's Kitchen is on the edge of Broadway, it's entirely possible you'll meet an aspiring actor or two. Whether they're one of the hot-as-hell drag queens from *La Cage* is up to you to discover. O

The Details

Get There: NYC has non-stop air from every major Canadian centre. Newark is convenient with $15 fast train connections between airport and Penn Station, at the south end of Hell's Kitchen. From the GTA VIR Rail/Amtrak is an option.

Stay: New York's hotels, even bad ones, are known for high prices. Pay attention; rates can change during your stay. Rates drop into the $150+ range at many properties during winter. Strong options for staying in Hell's Kitchen:

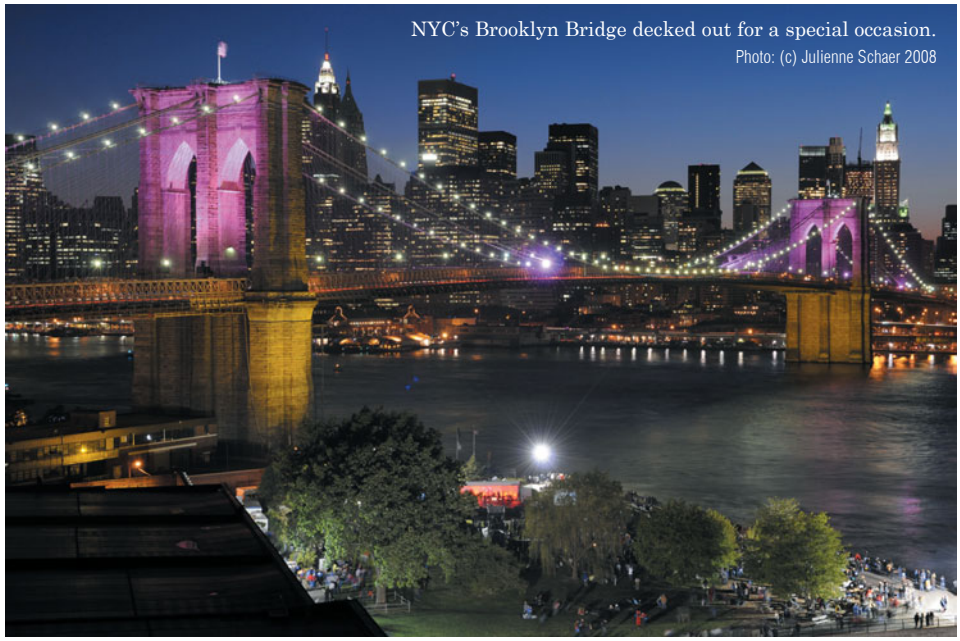
- **414 Hotel**, 414 West 46th Street, cozy neighbourhood spot, see review above, 212-399-0006, www.414hotel.com
- **Best Western President**, Just off Times Square. Rooms tend to be small but serviceable. Rates vary wildly, but often around $250. 234 West 48th St., 212-246-8800, www.bestwestern.com
- **Ink 48**, this new property by gay-positive Kimpton is on the far-west side of Hell's Kitchen, near Hudson River. 653 11th Ave. at 48th St., 212-757-0088, www.ink48.com
- **Hudson Hotel**, chic "design" hotel on the northern end of Hell's Kitchen, near Central Park, 356 West 58th St., 212-554-6000, www.hudsonhotel.com

Eat:

- **Arriba Arriba**, Mexican, 762 9th Ave., at 51st St., 212-489-0810, **www.arribaarribawest.com**
- **Bocca di Bacco**, Italian, 828 9th Ave. at 54th St., 212-265-8828, www.boccadibacconyc.com
- **Hummus Kitchen**, Middle-Eastern, 768 9th Ave., 212-333-3009, www.hummuskitchen.com
- **Amy's Bread**, 672 Ninth Ave. ('tween 46 & 47), 212-977-2670, www.amysbread.com

Play:

- Discount Theatre Tickets are available for many shows. **www.BroadwayBox.com**, **www.Playbill.com**. Same-day discount tickets available by joining the usually-long queue at TKTS in the middle of Times Square. Boards near the ticket windows display what's available.
- Full-price tickets for all shows are available through their websites, simply google the show name.
- **The Ritz Bar**, 369 W 46th St., 212-333-2554
- **Vlada Bar**, 331 W. 51st St., 212-974-8030, www.vladabar.com
- **Therapy Bar**, 348 W 52nd St., 212-397-1700, www.therapy-nyc.com
- **Don't Tell Mamma's Piano Bar**, 343 West 46th St., 212-757-0788 (reservations recommended), www.donttellmamanyc.com



NYC's Brooklyn Bridge decked out for a special occasion.
Photo: (c) Julienne Schaer 2008

3 sweet secrets

Forrest Johnston takes you to 3 spots in Canada to taste wines that are the surprising stuff of sweet dreams.

From top: Great way to arrive on Salt Spring Island, Photo: R. Shirley; Nova Scotia maple makes great wine; A view from Ile d'Orleans, Quebec, Photo R. Shirley

~ FORREST JOHNSTON

During many travels across Canada, I've discovered the wines I dreamed of as a kid. Back then...before my mother would allow me to touch the sinful juice, I fantasized about what it must taste like. I was sure it would taste like syrupy grape juice with a hint of cherry...which sounded like sherry...the sort of things a child's mind conjures up.

How disappointed I was when I finally got my first sip. It was cheap stuff out of a box. What kind? I think it just said "red."

While I now enjoy many wines, my childhood fantasy still kicks in and I often hope the first taste from a bottle will be sugary sweet, yet still beautifully balanced. What a joy to discover the ice wines, ciders, and specialty wines that many Canadian vintners produce. There's no better way to learn about them than visiting the actual wineries-drinking the fermented juices in the air where they were once fruits on the vines and trees.

While BC's Okanagan and Ontario's Niagara regions are well-known, here are three spots you may not have heard much about where you can sample truly magnificent, sweet Canadian drops.

Tasting *ice cider*, a uniquely Québec invention, is a true treat on Ile d'Orlean, near Québec City.
Photo: Randall Shirley

Ice Cider in Québec

Québeckers have finally figured out how to put a taste of their sex appeal in a bottle: it's called ice cider, and it is among the most astonishingly delicious drinks you'll ever sample. Ice cider is made in much the same way as icewine: apples are allowed to freeze to at least -8 Celsius on the trees so the sugars begin to crystallize prior to fermenting.

Québeckers invented this process, making this a truly Canadian beverage. Legend, which in this case dates back to only 1990, says the first ice cider was created in the Eastern Townships area of Dunham.

If you're truly lucky (or just a smart traveller), you'll do a day-trip on tiny Orleans Island (Île d'Orléans) just outside of gay-fave destination Québec City where Philippe Steinbach creates several tongue-dazzling ice ciders at the family-run estate, called Domain Steinbach. The cozy tasting room offers samples of all five of their ciders, alongside estate-made duck meat products, mustards, and jams. There are a number of other wineries on the island, along with numerous fruit farms and even a fromagerie that claims to use the first cheese recipe ever made in North America. Eating and drinking your way around this tiny island is among the best day-trips in the country.

Maple Wine in Nova Scotia.

Good grief, what we Canadians won't do with our beloved maple syrup, eh? As if it's not enough to pour our ridiculously delicious national sweetener over a stack of pancakes, or freeze it into taffy on snow, or to sell a log-cabin-shaped tin of it to every passing tourist, the clever winemakers at Jost Vineyards in Malagash, Nova Scotia, have gone and turned it into wine.

It's easy to fear something called "maple wine." I was afraid it would taste like a blend of Canadian Club rye with maple syrup. In fact, it is smooth, pleasant, and definitely wine, albeit a dessert wine.

Most other Nova Scotia wines—both reds and whites are grown and produced — come from the Annapolis Valley, a couple hours' drive from Malagash. Notable producers include Blomidon and Domaine de Grande Pre, but tiny Gaspereau Vineyards also produces excellent drops. While the region's wines aren't exactly well-known across Canada, and certainly not internationally, they are gradually coming into their own.

To experience them you'll really need to travel to Nova Scotia, where they're on many restaurant menus. In Halifax, where you'll likely fly into, let gay chef and co-owner Darren Lewis pair up the region's wines and foods for you at Chives Bistro. Another excellent spot for sampling many Nova Scotia wines in one spot is the wine boutique in the Halifax Farmer's Market.

Apple Wine in British Columbia.

Sail by ferry an hour away from Vancouver and land on the once-hippie paradise of Salt Spring Island for a scrumptious taste of apple dessert wine at Salt Spring Vineyards. The wine isn't too sweet, so you can get away with drinking a big glass and not feeling guilty...but then on Salt Spring, Canadian sensibilities are sort of tossed to the wind so buy yourself a bottle, head for the beach, and drink all you want (just don't let the cop catch you)...it goes great with bleu cheese, and Salt Spring Island just happens to have a lesbian-owned Moonstruck Cheese that turns out some of the planet's very best.

Remember: don't drink and drive. It's a felony, and it's just plain dumb. Always have a non-drinking driver when you tour wine areas. Now, book your trip and bottoms up! O

The Details: What's gay near the wineries?

Québec: Île d'Orléans is only 30 minutes drive from Québec City, where you'll find Le Drague, one of the world's most-unique gay bars, plus Hippocampe Sauna—a bathhouse that gets a 2-star hotel rating from the Québec tourism Association.

- Domaine Steinbach Cider, 418-828-0000, **www.domainesteinbach.com**
- Hippocampe Sauna & Hotel, 31 McMahon, Québec City, 1-888-388-1521 **www.hotelhippocampe.com**
- Le Chateau du Faubourg (gay-owned), 429 rue St-Jean, Québec City, 524-2902, **www.lechateaudufaubourg.com**

Nova Scotia: There are gay-owned accommodations about an hour east of Malagash in Pictou. And for those longing to see lesbian haircuts through the years (albeit on a straight woman), the Anne Murray Centre is an hour west in Spring Hill!

- Jost Vineyards, 1-800-565-4567, **www.jostwine.com**
- Limestone Inn Motel, 241 West River Rd., Pictou, NS, 902-485-4157, **www.lionstoneinn.ca**
- W.H. Davies House B&B, 90 Front Street, Pictou, NS, 902-485-2508, **www.davieshouse.com**

British Columbia: Salt Spring Island has its own tiny Pride festival (September 10-12, 2010, **www.glossi.org**), and there are a couple of gay-owned spots to sleep.

- Salt Spring Vineyards, 250-653- 9463, **www.saltspringvineyards.com**
- Frog Hollow Guest Cottage, 250-537-2499, **www.froghollowguestcottage.com**
- Valhalla Sleeping Units, 250-538-1992, **www.valhallasleepingunits.com**
- Salt Spring Inn, 1-877-537-9339, **www.saltspringinn.com**

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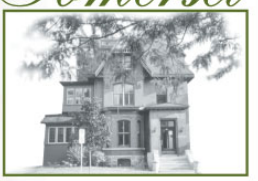

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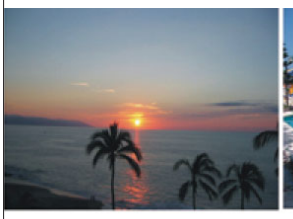

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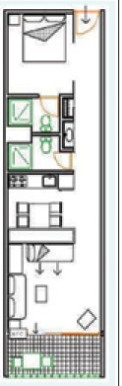

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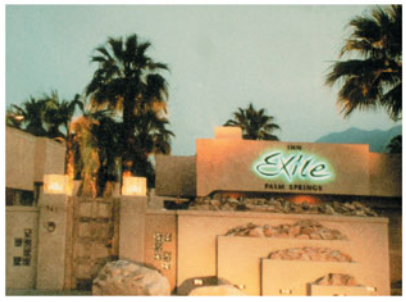

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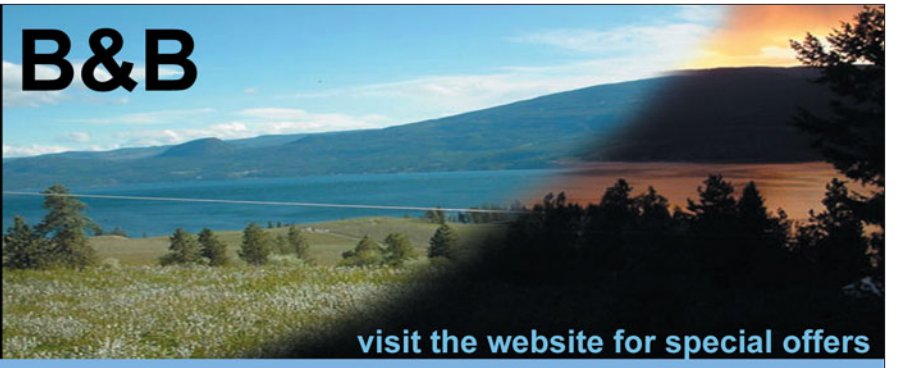

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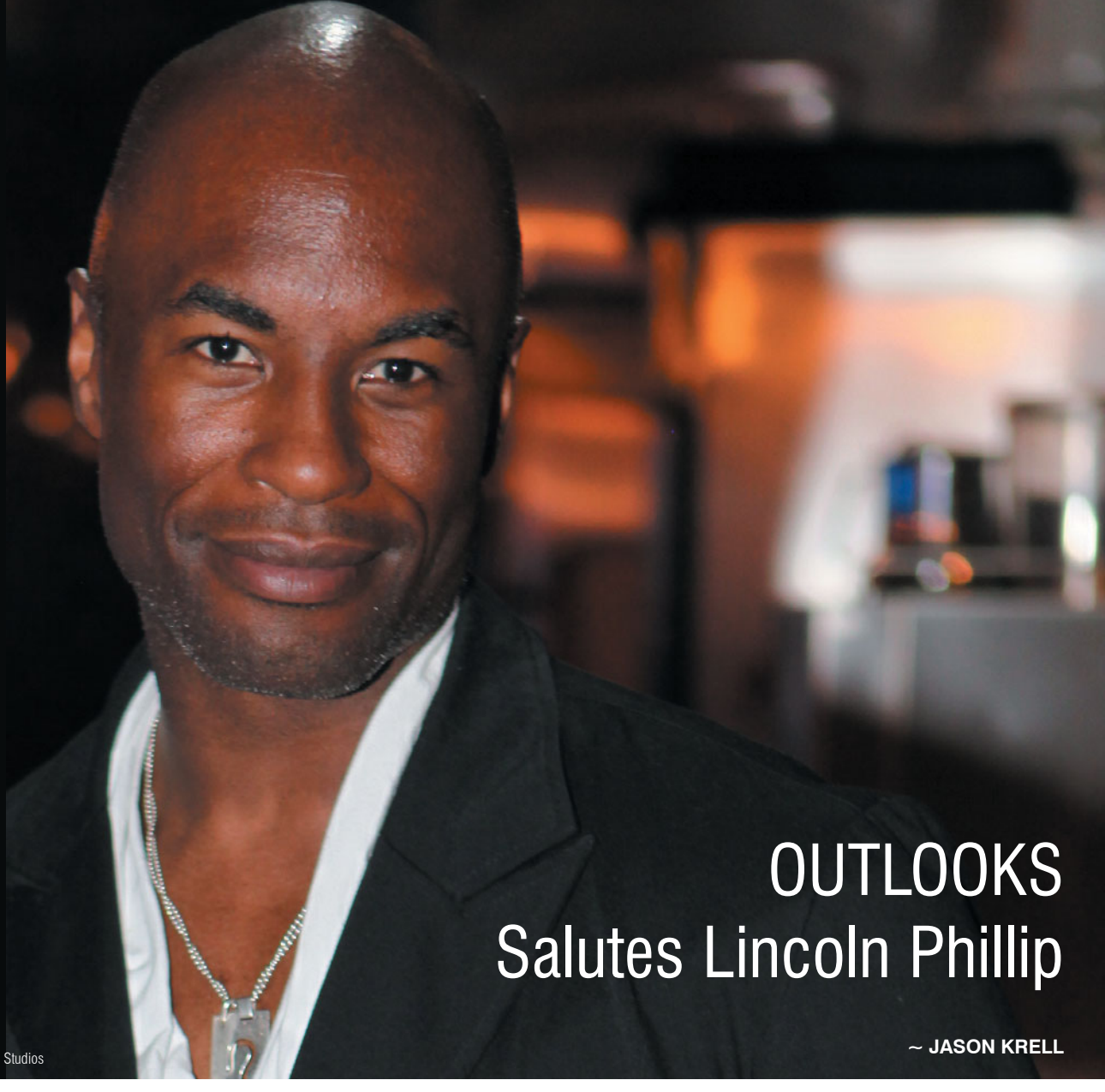

Photo: Cole Grey from Compass Studios

OUTLOOKS Salutes Lincoln Phillip

~ JASON KRELL

It is with a heavy heart that we share with OUTLOOKS readers the loss of our "Looks" editor and friend, Lincoln Phillip. Lincoln passed away on July 9, 2010 in Calgary.

Lincoln was well-known across the country as a gifted writer, stylist and trend-spotter. In addition to his work with OUTLOOKS Magazine, he was a contributor to the Calgary Herald and Avenue Magazine. His columns were extremely well-read, giving readers a heads-up about new designers on the horizon and an inside look at what was coming in fashion. However, Lincoln will be remembered by those who knew him for his larger-than-life laugh, winning smile and unwavering kindness

Lincoln was well-loved and respected by all who knew him, and I am honoured to have called Lincoln my friend. It was always such a treat to see Lincoln at an event. He was the kind of guy who gave you his full attention and always laughed at your jokes (no matter how bad they might have been).

Tributes from friends and colleagues could fill this entire issue; but we wanted to share a few words from others who were touched by him.

Leah Van Loon, Stylist:

I don't know when I actually met Lincoln; but he was there when I went to Holt Renfrew, giving the okay to the manager who interviewed me. I loved working with him, and even when I didn't, I would call him up just to hear his laugh. Lincoln loved fashion—from a stylist's and a journalist's perspective—but he understood it from a business perspective, too. Everyone who met him felt as though they could call him a friend. He had that kind of immediate effect on people. Looking back, I can't think of any time I spent with him that wasn't wonderful, fun and full of laughter. He was always a supporting and a truly caring friend. I will miss him terribly.

Haithem Elkadiki, Designer:

Lincoln Phillip's passion for fashion inspired and helped so many in the fashion industry. He was the first journalist to profile me as an up-and-coming designer, and he even commissioned me to make him a piece. His support inspired me to keep working hard in this tough business. He always attended my shows and was willing to help however he could. I will forever miss our lunches, dance parties and fashion talks. He will be truly missed by everyone who knew him.

Kim Flanagan, Stylist:

Lincoln was one of the first people I met in Calgary almost ten years ago and he gave me hope. If he lived in Cowtown, then surely I could survive. We started the same day at Holt Renfrew and were training partners. It was love for me at first site and he let me hang on his right bicep (poor Linc). He put up with me at every event, danced with me, always walked me to my car, supported all my functions and supported all that I did. You felt special just by being in his presence. His gentle grandeur was magnetic; his smile and laugh were the best. I am honoured to have known him. O

The New Victorian

Photographed by Gerard Yunker
Direction by Len Mastaler
Styled by Leah Van Loon

Beige long sleeve waffle tee from **crown surplus**
White oversized sheer tee by Alexander Wang and olive button detail cargo pants by Kill City, both from **Primitive**
Heather grey fleece shorts by Wings and Horn from **Henry**
Black and brown two-tone boots by Hudson from **Gravity Pope**
Charcoal wool blazer by Velour from **Leo**
Matte silver ring by Saundra Messinger and lapis and silver necklace, both from **Rubaiyat**
Brown mouton collar by **Paul Hardy Designs**

Her
Olive satin blazer with knit collar by Alexander Wang from **Holt Renfrew**
Grey henley by Wings and Horn from **Henry**
Black bloomers from **Paul Hardy**
Black leather belt with brass and crystal buckle from **Used Vintage**
Beige suede boots by NDC from **Gravity pope**
Woolly knee socks from **The Bay**

Him
Taupe cowl neck tee by Helmut Lang from **Holt Renfrew**
Black long cotton vest by Chronicles of Never from **Leo**
Striped silk harem pant by Elizabeth and James, and leather brass and agate necklace by Beth Orduna, both from **Primitive**
Black leather boots by Cydwq from **Gravity Pope**

Her
Cream satin top by Alexander Lang and grey cable knit arm warmers from **Holt Renfrew**
Black chiffon Miniskirt with chain stripes by Gryphon from **Primitive**
Brown stretch leather leggings by **Paul Hardy**
Silver and bronze pods necklace by Margaret Ellis and 14k green, yellow, and rose gold with peridot cross by Pamela Froman, both from **Rubaiyat**

Him
Grey long sleeve scoop neck tee by Helmut Lang, cream and black wrap top by Céline, grey silk pants by Gucci, all from **Holt Renfrew**
Sterling silver neck cuff with spice resin pendent by David Urso from **Rubaiyat**

Blouse by Gucci and sweater by Helmut Lang, both from **Holt Renfrew**
Black full length pleated chiffon skirt by **Paul Hardy**
Black lace up combat boots by John Fluevog from **Gravity Pope**
Silver beaded button up cuff by Love Heals from **Primitive**
24k gold with oxidized silver and diamonds teardrop necklace by Gurhan from **Rubaiyat**

Him
Black wool blazer by Stella McCartney and olive cotton button front dress by Theory, both from **Holt Renfrew**
Burgundy and yellow snakeskin belt with geode and brass buckle by Joven from **Rubaiyat**

Her
Purple satin ruffle neck top by Lanvin and black leggings by Helmut Lang, both from **Holt Renfrew**
Black goat hair vest and perforated leather zip-up arm warmers, both by **Paul Hardy**
Belt from **Holt Renfrew**

Styling: Leah Van Loon
www.leahvanloon.com
Hair & Makeup: Olga Onulov
Art Direction: Len Mastaler
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Model Mayhem

Photo: Bruno Van Mosseveldé (http://models.com/people/bruno-van-mosseveldé)

If you've watched *Fashion Television* or picked up a fashion magazine in the last four years, you've probably seen Nick Snider. Known for his blonde locks and perfect pout, Nick went from being the guy you saw when you bought a slice from Pizza Hut to the face of Prada.

At six foot one, 155 pounds, Snider's lanky physique has made him one of the most sought after male models today. Forbes.com even ranked him #5 on the list of the World's 10 Most Successful Male Models. Not bad, considering he's one of the few models in his league who is open about his homosexuality.

It's not all globetrotting and a-list parties however, Snider was also asked to pose for a mug shot earlier this year after being arrested in Arkansas for public drunkenness and disorderly conduct. It was also alleged that, while being arrested, he offered to perform oral sex on a police officer and a corrections officer to make the matter disappear. Is it the case of a model behaving badly or redneck policing? We let Snider tell us his side of that story, about landing himself the title of "supermodel" and even on Ashley Olsen's lap.

How old were you when you started modeling?

I was 17 and actually started because a police officer told me I should give it a shot, while a friend of mine was getting in trouble. I sent pictures to five agencies and they all got back to me. I ended up going with the smallest of them, the one who I felt could give me the most attention.

How did your family feel about the whole thing?

They were worried, mostly that I would get scammed; but now they're super happy and supportive.

What did you do before you got into modeling?

I went from making pizza at Pizza Hut to travelling the world-a huge change!

What was your first "Oh My God" job?

When I started modeling, it was coming up to New York Fashion Week and I was booked for 12 shows. There aren't even that many men's shows in New York anymore, so I was thrilled to book that many in my first season.

How did you handle the immediate attention?

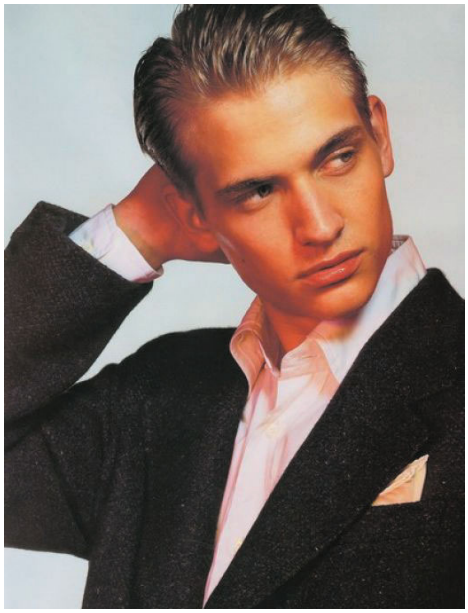
I don't even know how I'm still handling it. I love being in the spotlight and have people talking about me; but it can be difficult too. You have to learn to accept criticism and know that not everyone will love you.

Were you "out" when you started modeling?

Since I was 14, everyone just knew that I wasn't straight, so I didn't really need to come out.

Have you ever been booked because you've met someone at a gay party or club?

I've been booked for a lot of editorial work. A huge part of this business is going out and meeting people. I actually booked Prada after being at a party in Paris.



Do you think that it has helped or hindered your career?

They say people don't want to hire openly gay models, as it could impact their brand; but I've never experienced a problem. I'm pretty much myself, I don't act too differently. Clients like when you are yourself and not just a carbon copy model. There have been rumours, however, that have stopped me from doing certain things.

Have you had any interesting celebrity run-ins lately?

Oh my goodness! When I was in Paris, I accidently got into the wrong limo and sat right on Ashely Olsen. I was like, Hello! She was at the same party and we exchanged numbers; but we haven't really hung out. She was a real sweetheart but I wouldn't want to be on her bad side.

If one Googles "Nick Snider" some salacious stories come up. Do you care to comment on any of them?

Are you referring to my arrest?

Yes.

I'll comment—I actually haven't before. That was all blown way out of proportion. It didn't happen like it was reported. I was at a friend's house and the party got out of control. Apparently, in Arkansas, if you're at a party and take one foot out of a house, you are publicly intoxicated. The police asked me to come outside and I was arrested. They totally tricked me. But I never said what they said I did. I was in jail for about 16 hours and the police were actually really nice. I got to keep my cell phone and shoes and even redo my mug shot in a different outfit. They brought me pizza, too, while others ate my bologna.

Would you say you're generally pretty well-behaved?

Yes, I would say so. Everyone loves a train wreck story and there's always more bad press than good. It was even reported this week that I was dead.

Nick went from being the guy you saw when you bought a slice from Pizza Hut to the face of Prada.

Pardon?

There was a guy in a different city in Florida with the same name as mine, and he died in his car. All of a sudden, it was all over the news and my agent was getting called for statements. I end up in the weirdest situations sometimes; it's so random.

What do you do in your down time?

I'm such a dork—I'll sit on my computer and Facebook all day. I'm also getting into the World of Warcraft, which I'm super excited about. It's a game where you fight people on your computer—people become super obsessed. I'll probably do that for a year and a half (he laughs)

What's coming up next for you?

First, my 22nd birthday, then fashion week at the beginning of September and then on to editorial season. I have a bunch of other things on the side in the works too; but I can't talk about that quite yet. O

Photo: Bruno Van Mossevelde (http://models.com/people/bruno-van-mossevelde)

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Kevin Keller:

A New Gay Hunk Enrolls at Riverdale High

~ JASON KRELL

There will be a new kid on the block this fall in Riverdale: He's a tall, handsome, blond, blue-eyed and gay... say what? The iconic Archie Comics, that has been lining checkout aisles next to the gum since 1942, will welcome Kevin Keller, its first openly gay character in Veronica #202. "Isn't it Bromantic?"

In his debut, we find the clean-cut and dashing Kevin having no problem making friends at Riverdale High, quickly becoming part of the in-crowd after he defeats Jughead (whose sexuality has been up for debate for years) in a burger-eating contest at Pop's Cholklit Shoppe.

Naturally, Kevin catches the eye of man-eating Veronica, the spoiled rotten girl who gets whatever (and whoever) she wants. Only, she can't understand why Kevin isn't jumping and falling all over himself for her. It seems only Jughead knows the truth (for now) and eggs Veronica on, messing with her ego.

"The introduction of Kevin is just about keeping the world of Archie Comics current and inclusive," says Archie Comics co-CEO Jon Goldwater in a press release. "Riverdale has always been a safe world for everyone. It just makes sense to have an openly gay character in Archie comic books."

In recent years, Archie Comics has been shaking its play-it-safe storylines and is introducing a better-rounded set of characters. It wasn't until 1974 that the comic got its first African-America character. Now, we see Archie dating the super-bright, catsuit-wearing black bassist Valerie from Josie and the Pussycats. The two were even featured kissing on the cover of a recent issue. Scandalous? Not really; but for Archie, a little.

Is this the beginning of a new and edgier Archie Comics? We spoke to Daniel Parent, lead artist and writer, from his home in Milford, Pennsylvania, about the new broad-shouldered schoolboy and how he would fit in to the Archie formula.

How long have you been with Archie Comics?

I have been here for 23 years; but Archie Comics has been around for 70 years, since 1940.

Was the introduction of a gay character your idea or how did it come about?

It came up at one of our regular story meetings for the Veronica book. Veronica has always been known for chasing guys and getting what she wants. And I thought it would be funny to introduce a character that she couldn't get; to have her jumping though hoops, getting dressed up and wondering why he's not into her. She's so self-absorbed she wouldn't think for a moment that it would be possible for a man not to be completely into her. In the introduction, other characters know Kevin is gay except for Veronica, and they let her stir in it. Archie Comics has had more and more ethnicity in its books, and I thought it would be fun to have a gay character. My colleagues loved the idea.

Did readers ever request a gay character?

It has come up before on fan sites. People wanted to know why there wasn't a gay character. We kept saying it would happen, and now it has.

What has been the response to this so far?

Overwhelmingly positive, which has been fantastic. Of course, there's some negative feedback; but it's to be expected. We never get 100 percent support on anything. We've had a lot of feedback from families in particular. I was at a comic book signing a few weeks ago, and I didn't have a single bad response. We'll see what is said when it hits the shelves.

Will Kevin be an ongoing character or is he temporary?

He's going to be ongoing. Lots of people have asked if this is just for attention; but it's not. I created him and I won't let him disappear. He's a great character and I've got lots of storylines in mind for him.

Is romance in the cards for Kevin?

Right now, I'm getting him situated in Riverdale. And, after the first issue. he and Veronica will become good friends. I'm sure that, at some point, it will happen, it has to; but I want to work out his relationships with the core characters first.

Will Veronica become his hag?

Well, there is going to be a special friendship; but we don't want it to be too stereotypical where Veronica and the gay kid go shopping. There'll be more to it than that. You'll see.

Do you think the kids at Riverdale High will welcome him or could there be some bullying?

They're going to welcome him. We want to portray Riverdale as a welcoming and ideal place to live. It's like when you used to watch the Brady Bunch-it was exactly where you wanted to live yourself. In society, we know it's not exactly the case; but we want to show the happy side of things. In my daughter's school, for example, homosexual students are very well-accepted and are flourishing. That's how I see Riverdale High.

Is this the beginning of a more serious side to the story, or do you expect it to stay lighthearted?

I'd have to say lighthearted. I don't see our getting dramatic; we'll still follow the Archie formula. Even with the introduction of Kevin, it's pretty light with Jughead stirring the pot.

Can we expect a Riverdale Pride?

I don't know. I guess we will need more gay characters for that.

What other kinds of diverse characters are we going to meet in the Archie comics?

Well, we didn't do it to make a big deal; but Archie has been dating Valerie from Josie and the Pussycats. We're always looking for those kinds of hookups. And I think Archie and Josie work together, not because they're interracial but because they're both smart and interesting characters. We featured the two of them kissing on the first cover and we were aware it could cause some stir; but it wasn't that earth-shattering.

There is another storyline in the works too. When a nearby high school shuts down and new kids get bused to Riverdale High—you'll see lots of diversity in future issues. O

Shavings from My Head

~ J. CORBETT HOLMES

Me, Myself and Why

Diary of Self-Dating Game

"Before I met Ingrid, I was single for a six years," my friend Katherine shared, between bites of vegetable lasagna over lunch. "And, during that time, I decided I would be the person I wanted to date. I took myself to restaurants I wanted to try and movies I wanted to see. I even gave myself the occasional massage."

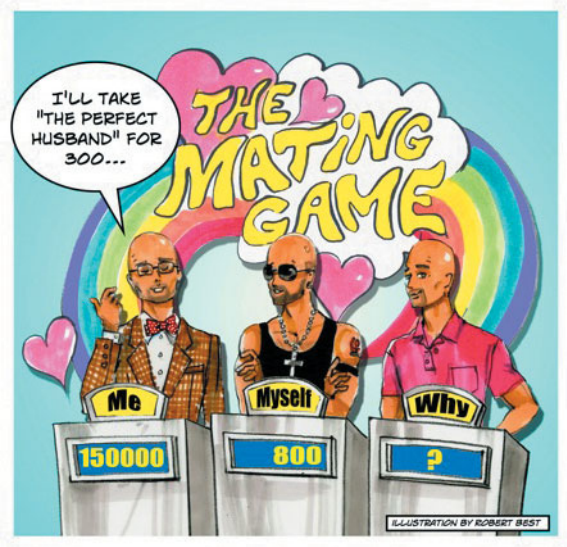
The statement was so simple, yet obviously infused with a lot of thought and commitment.

Be the person I want to date, I thought. Hummm...Interesting.

Over a year had passed since I'd decided to take myself out of the game. Why? Because, basically, I felt off my game, minus my mojo. Almost two years earlier, I'd rekindled the relationship that had impacted my heart the most. That old adage you can never go back, much as I hoped things would be different, rang-in harsh, disapproving tones—like a buzzer to the wrong answer. Round two, and I was out. Applying my standard recuperative practices, I immediately began to date. Just as quickly, I understood my heart was in shreds. I would have to stop. I'd officially become a bad date.

For the next 48 hours, Katherine's brainchild kept popping up in my thoughts like that difficult question in a game show—the one with the double points. **If *I* could be the person I wanted to date, then maybe I'd get the answers** to the bonus round in that ever-elusive category: The Perfect Partner. So I began to ask myself questions.

I'll take perfect husbands for 100.



First question. I began by going backwards, revisiting the dates and relationships I'd already had. Although this was unpleasant, there was no getting around it. But, while reviewing the painful facets, it also revived the things I loved in each of them: Steven for his love of books and introducing me to the flea market; CJ for his right-brain-left-brain approach to life and work; Ron for his balls-out attitude and post-it love notes; Craig for his rapid assessment and readjustment to challenging situations. A lot of amazing points were gained.

Next question. I had to acknowledge that, like many of us, I had a fantasy date = the "perfect" husband. Mine seemed to have a lot of the attributes commonly posted on the dating websites: Great bod, sweet, regular guy, likes walks on the beach, eating ice cream in bed, loves all my favourite movies and books, and in between earning tons of bank, has both the ability and desire to be at my beck and call...oh, and of course, he fulfills every sexual fantasy. Yet, oddly, I'd never met him.

Thus, ding-ding-ding.

Next question. I had to acknowledge that, to become the person I wanted to date, I would also have to include (my) character flaws. The query, despite the unflattering view, had to occur. The list was humbling, the question a game-changer. Here's a prompt: nobody's perfect. And although we all know that, we tend to easily forget when game hunting.

That, took me to my **next question**; forcing me to really stop and think. I loved the person I used to be: a social, gregarious, extroverted homo. But, because I hadn't taken the time to stop and properly question the game from round to round, I'd become a homo with no mojo—losing points with each round of dating. In other words, I'd become an outsider within myself. And nobody wants to date that.

Final round, **last question: With all I'd examined, each self-inquiry, how would I (now) contribute as a single, to the collective process of coupledom?**

Before I was ready to come out and play again, I took a non-commercial break for that one. The Mating Game wasn't over yet.

Noncommercial Break: I began to take yoga, took myself to the movies (alone), did some volunteer work, read a lot, wrote in my journal every day, took a meditation class themed around love, spent time with friends whose attributes I loved, and took a vacation to the place that nourished me the most. And while I did all of this, my questioning framed each activity.

Throughout all of my being myself to become my date, I had to constantly remind myself that I was doing it to find (a new and improved version of) me.

This, at times, was challenging when: the boy in front of me at yoga had an ass that made facing downward dog-morph into doggie style-like thoughts; or the man at the art opening became more enticing than what was displayed on the walls. Translation: sexual attraction was clouding my exploration. So I put myself on "cockdown"—my version of no sex—until one head could properly make room for another kind of head.

The thing is that we're all looking for that "perfect" fit, that someone who fulfills all our needs. Me, Myself and I included. But once I chose to play The Mating Game differently—with a renewed view and understanding—although I've not won yet, (and I know this will sound cheesy. Trust me.) I fell in love...with my new Me.

And this is what I learned—a few Q (queer) cards for you viewers:

I learned that, when playing the Mating Game, the rules and questions change with every round. I learned that every (past) boyfriend or husband was (and is) worthwhile—even when painful—contributing to my growth and improving my ability to play the next round. I learned that, when a relationship hits you hard, if you don't take the time to question and re-evaluate, you will only lose the next round. (Translation: put yourself on cockdown, have a non-commercial break from it all.)

And finally, I learned that men are a game and that dating is the discovery of endless correspondence, not only with yourself, but also with the world.

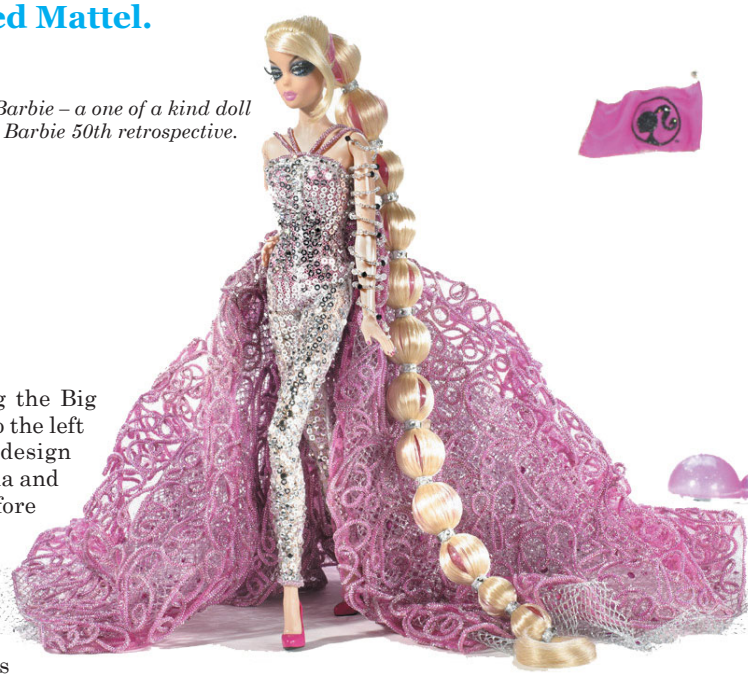
Bonus point: This "game" took place during the final 30 days of my forties. I am now fifty. Mid-century match-game on! O

For a closer shave—blog postings and previously published columns—visit **www.shavingsfrommyhead.com**.

Jim Holmes

Jim Holmes
Working with a Fashion Icon

Barbie began her life as a teenage fashion model. But she's enjoyed a multitude of careers—paleontologist, Olympic athlete, Presidential candidate, astronaut, etc.—since. She has also represented the US Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. But, regardless of vocation, Barbie has remained the epitome of trendsetting style, wearing one fabulously chic outfit after another—with matching accessories! How is it all possible, you ask? Well, it takes a village...and that village is named Mattel.



Future Barbie – a one of a kind doll done for Barbie 50th retrospective.

Although legend has it that Mattel manufacturers and marketers were originally opposed to Barbie, luckily a change of mind prevailed allowing little girls—and no doubt some little boys too—the opportunity to make a new friend. And, with current sales topping a billion bucks annually, the doll has proven to be a valuable cash cow which explains the consistent updating by Mattel to satisfy the discerning Barbie clientele. Limited Edition dolls are produced in quantities of 35,000 or less; whereas, Collectible dolls are produced in a quantity greater than 35,000. But, precisely how much greater is anybody's guess, since actual production numbers aren't available for public consumption. Oh, get over it! Every beautiful doll needs her secrets, and her trusted design team, too. After all, one of the coolest jobs for an out, proud, gay man has got to be the designer behind the doll. No? Well, the multi-talented Jim Holmes has that position all sewn up.

After graduating from New York's prestigious Fashion Institute of Technology with a BFA, Jim worked with Arnold Scaasi, Albert Nipon, Frank Masandrea and others designing day dresses, cocktail dresses and sportswear. After leaving the Big Apple to follow his heart to the left coast, more sensational design gigs with Lanz of California and Carol Little followed, before he flexed his creative muscles by striking out on his own with Jim Holmes Inc. Although his signature line of occasion dresses debuted to rave reviews, his hard-earned success came at great personal cost. So, deciding to chuck it all, he hooked up with America's very first supermodel, Barbie, and he's never looked back!

Jim's website (**www.shavingsfrommyhead.com**) is a kaleidoscope of color, featuring dozens of Barbie fashions that run the gamut from geometric 1960s inspired Mod miniskirts to intricately detailed ball gowns to futuristic fantasies with hairstyles so outlandish they could rival Marie Antoinette's. Trust me, his originality is staggering. I sure don't remember my older sister's doll having such eye-popping outfits! Recently, Jim moved to Barbie Adult consumer products to art direct the style guides and product development. In between projects at the Mattel Dreamhouse, I was able to chat with this insightful, energetic guy.

Who was an inspirational fashion icon for you?

My mom was a model and into her fashion. She heavily influenced my taste level and eye. I credit her with a lot of my fashion awareness. As for others, Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly had great, classic style and watching their movies as a kid..well, let's just say, they left their mark.

What's a perk for you regarding your job?
When I was working on toys, it was really great to know that everything I created, influenced little girls around the world. But I love working back in the adult arena and getting to collaborate with other creatives like Jonathan Adler-who did a line of Barbie things for her 50th birthday.

Will you tell the readers about Richard Simmons' Barbie-themed birthday party?
Well, as some may already know, Richard is an avid Barbie collector. So, as a surprise, I was invited by a mutual friend to be a special guest. The party was loads of crazy fun and Richard loved the birthday gifts I brought along from "Barbie". It was a very playful day. (laughs)

Okay, let's pause for a moment to dish about Barbie's paramour, Ken. Actually, let's make that former paramour, because in 2004 an official press conference was held announcing that Barbie and Ken's relationship had hit a rough patch. At that time, Ken put the following spin on their predicament, "The flame of love has gone out, so Barbie and I decided to spend some time apart. I'm confident we will always stay friends."

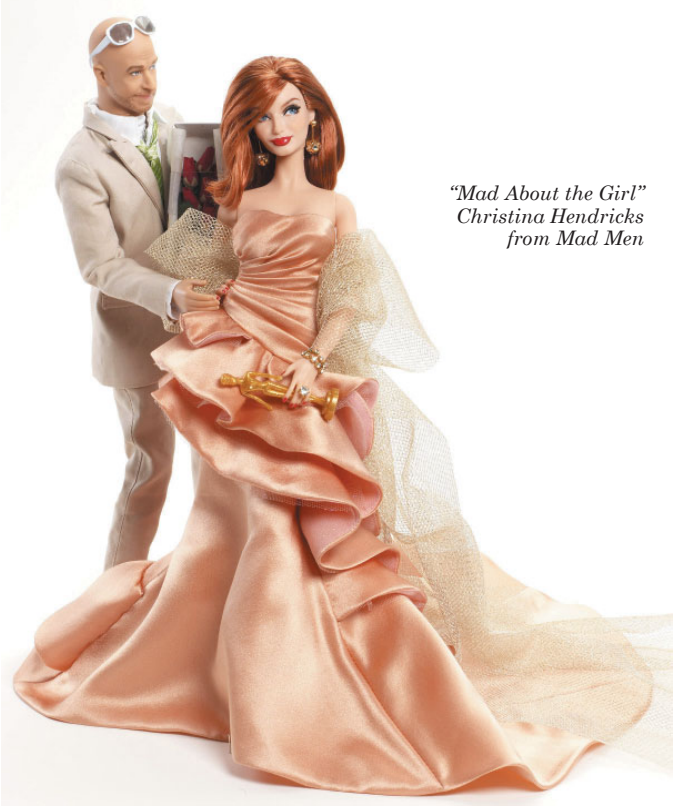
Now back to Jim...When does Ken turn 50?
In 2011, and all I can say for now, is that when Ken and Barbie rekindle their romance, he'll be wearing a really great outfit!

What works best in a male doll?
That depends on your target market. For instance, young girls would be interested in a Justin Bieber doll, or an Abercrombie and Fitch looking doll—that's very trendy. Whereas, the Collector Group would be interested in the Twilight dolls, based on characters from those movies.

What's the scoop on the recently released Mad Men dolls?
There are four new dolls based on the characters from the TV series, all designed by Robert Best—my friend, coworker and illustrator of my column. But recently for charity, I designed a one-of-a-kind Christina Hendricks. She portrays the worldly wise office manager, Joan Holloway. She's my favorite character.

Lastly, Mattel will leave no stone unturned if some poor schmo attempts to sully beloved Barbie's spotless reputation or mire her in sordid controversy. The overly protective parent company has even been litigious, because, let's face it, a sexhibitionist she ain't! In fact on a list of The 101 Most Influential People Who Never Lived, Barbie ranks at an impressive number 43. (The numero uno spot is awarded to the Marlboro Man.) May glamourous Barbie reign forever—outfits sold separately! O

Hip 2 Be Square...done as a one of a kind for Divine Design / Project Angel Food charity



"Mad About the Girl" Christina Hendricks from Mad Men

It's a Doll's Life

- Barbara Millicent Rogers was born March 9, 1959. She is 11½" tall.
- The doll's original retail price was $3.00.
- Since her debut, it's estimated that more than a billion Barbie dolls have been sold in 150 nations around the globe.
- Barbie has represented more than 45 different nationalities.
- Her boyfriend, Ken Carson, was born in 1961. He is 12" tall.
- Throughout the years, in excess of 100 million yards of fabric have been used for Barbie's unique fashions.
- Some of Barbie's glittering fashions have been designed by Givenchy, Dior, Bob Mackie, Juicy Couture, Armani, Vera Wang, Ralph Lauren and Versace.
- Christian Louboutin designed an exclusive pair of shoes in her signature colour: Barbie 219 Pink.
- Pop Artist Andy Warhol created a Barbie painting in 1985.
- In 2000, the doll's stomach featured a navel for the very first time.
- Mattel launched Totally Tattoos Barbie in 2009.

~ DAVID KING

Things That Go Bump In the Night

The Scissor Sisters Return to Canada

Scissor Sisters' out vocalist Jake Shears might get the "twink" admiration from his fans; but it's his bearded guitarist and co-lyricist Scott Huffman (a.k.a. Babydaddy) who has the bears circling over him like he's a jar of honey. "Jake gets a lot of attention just by virtue of being the lead singer," Babydaddy once noted, "But when the boys want a little beef, they come to me."

Since their 2004 debut album *Scissors Scissors* became the UK's best-selling album of the year (and a top ten in this century), the group that's spun a millennial web over rock-glam-disco has attracted the likes of Depeche Mode, Sir Elton John, and Kylie Minogue (Minogue's summer smash, "All the Lovers" is given a country turn by the band using a slide guitar). It hasn't pulled the Sisters into full concert "arena" status yet, Babydaddy admits, but they're well on their way with their latest LP, *Night Works*.

"There are a lot of things that go bump in the night on these tracks," says Babydaddy, "and a lot of reflection and existentialism about the world too. Even when it hurts you, you breathe it—you *breathe* it. It's about what happens when the sun goes down - everything from love to lust, to playfulness to murder - but there's also so much on there about work and just survival."

Shuffling around collaborators since the 2006 album *Ta-Dah*, the Sisters' core members (Shears, Babydaddy, Ana Matronic and equally out Del Marquis) have taken their time to develop *Night Works*. A little techno, a little rock, a little electro-disco and always 'glam', it is what one would expect from the group, undercut with a little more maturity in multi-instrumentation and conceptualization.

A co-founder and co-lyricist in the band with Shears (the pair started the band fresh out of Columbia University), Babydaddy flits between keyboard, bass, guitar and banjo; an Ivor Novello Award-winning multi-instrumentalist, he's paired up with Shears outside the band to write Minogue's hit "I Believe In You" as well as the main track from her documentary *White Diamond*. It's a life outside the band that demonstrates their truly raw talents in the industry itself, and with their own retro inspirations, it's not surprising the pair have also produced remixes for the likes of Pet Shop Boys,

Amanda Lear, Blondie and The Ones. When asked to explain how he and Shears have fine-tuned their collaborative process and lyric writing over the years, Babydaddy is quick to point out that with Shears, there are no rules and no limits.

"Every album for us is like the album that didn't get made," Babydaddy laughs. "We have lots of different models for how we've collaborated; but it's not much more complicated than Jake and I just getting in a room and getting inspired. A lot of it is mood, vibe, how we want it to sound, and then looking at inspirations through music or film or really anything that inspires us at the time. It's all like a game of dominoes, where there's this chain reaction—so that it just evolves. It's kind of later that we figure out who's playing what, and there's no order to it, so we try to work from the most organic way we can".

The band's 2004 debut album may be within the top 50 record sales of all time; but it's taken their native US a little more time to get into the groove. After Walmart banned the debut album *Scissor Sisters* for one track's attack on "conservatism," Babydaddy isn't quite sure how *Night Works*, its Robert Mapplethorpe-ass, cover image in tow, has now managed to make it onto the Walmart shelves.

"There's not really much profanity on this one," Babydaddy chuckles, "although I think they [Walmart] weren't impressed by the album cover. But then hey, you can just take that home, slip it off and throw it into the fire, I guess."

Night Works features an unusual mix of yet another out gay icon, Sir Ian McKellen. It was a conscious choice for the Sisters' track "Invisible Light", says Babydaddy, who has McKellen reciting theatrical spoken word (they caught him at his London dressing room during a production of *Waiting for Godot*, no less). The song is just one of many highly diverse tracks that feed into the album's 'nocturnal' theme, as does the pop-catchy feel good debut single "Fire With Fire", the disco-tech beat of "Any Which Way" and the celebratory videos that go with them.

Following their last Canadian tour date in Vancouver this September (Scissor Sisters handpicked the dance band Little Dragon to open for them), Babydaddy's looking forward to his US tour dates for the album's North American promo.

"We've had some really good shows now in the US," says the Daddy. "It's all a bit different when you travel. I mean the UK really embraces unique, flamboyant music - if you want to call it flamboyant—that freak aspect of pop stardom. But now, you can see how artists like Lady Gaga have made that happen in the US, too."

Hey: back to the great ass by Mapplethorpe on the album cover.

"It IS a great ass," says Babydaddy. "Unfortunately, it's also the ass of a dancer who died from AIDS in the 1980s, so there is that melancholy side to it too. I think what helped make a final decision on it was that so many people had so many reactions to it, and it just got people talking."

It's been far too long, but then clearly Scissor Sisters has become a core group that's constantly evolving not only in experimentation with sound and mood, but band collaboration as well. Excited about their Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver concert dates, I ask the Daddy what he's most looking forward to his long-awaited Canuck return.

"I'm totally excited about it! And it means we're going to see strippers too!"

"You mean in Montréal, Toronto or Vancouver?" I ask.

"Um, yes," the bearcub laughs.

For more info on Scissor Sisters and tour dates, visit **Sistersisters.com**. O

VANCOUVER Out & about

Tyra Sanchez & Sam Colt at Celebrities

Pride Parade & Celebration August 1

Nikolai Alekseev

Cruisey T

Candis Cayne

Planning an event in Vancouver? Contact Barry at 604.685.1377 and he'll see about covering it in Out & About. Photos by: Barry Piersdorff

HALIFAX Out & about

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Photos: Linda Huston Eckess

Lilith Fair June 27

CRI Rodeo July 1

Photos: Linda Huston Eckess

Planning an event in Calgary? Contact Perry at pmah@outlooks.ca and he'll see about covering it in Out & About.

Club Sapien Opening July 29

EDMONTON Out & about

Photos: Jacksonphotographix

Planning an event in Edmonton? Contact jackson@jacksonphotografix.com and he'll see about covering it in Out & About.

Play Closing Night August 14

Opening Night Junction August 13

Out & about TORONTO

Photos: Spencer Xiong

Open Air Affair July 3

Pride Parade July 4

Treehouse Party July 4

MONTREAL Out & about

Pride August 15

Divers/Cité August 1

Photos: David King and Erick Contreras

Photos: Yusuke Mori, www.yusukemori.com

Don't You Wish...

Riley was born and raised in Vancouver. He feels it is truly one of the best cities on earth and has no plans to ever leave.

He recently participated in Vancouver's Next Gay Top Model, and tied for runner-up. It was an awesome experience, having met some great people and receiving strong photos for his portfolio, and something out of the ordinary that he wouldn't normally do if not for the encouragement of others.

Riley graduated from Simon Fraser University last year with a Bachelor's of Science in Biomedical Physiology & Kinesiology, and plans on continuing his studies by pursuing a Master's degree further down the road.

Riley has been a bartender at 1181 for the last few months and just got promoted to General Manager. He is really excited about running such an amazing local hot spot and continuing to build on its award-winning reputation.

He participates annually in the BC Cancer Foundation's Underwear Affair, a 10k run through the streets of Vancouver in your underwear to raise money for cancers below the waist, as well as Movember, where men sport a moustache for the month of November to raise money for prostate cancer.

Riley has been in a relationship for the past year and a half with the most amazing person. It gets better and better every day. They live in the heart of downtown with their cat, Socket.

Riley

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September Horoscope

September may leave us in the dust as Jupiter, Mercury, Neptune, Pluto and Uranus all retrograde. Scratch that itch, but do it with a soft brush and not a hammer. Life changes and takes on twists and turns. Surpirse is the only constant.

VIRGO (AUGUST 24 - SEPTEMBER 23)

Queer Virgins like things in their place, tasks completed and a job well done. September, however, will find ways to throw unexpected barriers in your path. Don't fight it. Let things on your desk pile up. Allow the fates to toss your best laid plans. Sometimes, life needs a little oomph and surprise. Live for the now—splurge on a long-desired object—talk to the birds.

LIBRA (SEPTEMBER 24 - OCTOBER 23)

Rumblings in relationships shouldn't deter you from doing what you need to do. September brings a Yin-Yang energy to partnerships. Where does the "we" end and the "me" begin? If you find yourself going your own way, doing your own thing, chalk it up to the waywardness of the cosmos. Resolve to mend fences later in the fall as soon as you figure out what and who you want.

SCORPIO (OCTOBER 24 - NOVEMBER 22)

If you feel that you want to escape from your usual and comfortable surroundings, then do so. Plan a lavish trip, get out of your own skin and experience some life-shaping things. Proud Scorps may find that they gravitate to the underside of life with things going on below the surface and behind the ethereal scenes. If so, let yourself be elevated and mellowed. Seance anyone?

SAGITTARIUS (NOVEMBER 23 - DECEMBER 22)

Gay Archers never seem to know when enough is enough. September delivers you a reminder that your finances need some attention. But you seem to be undeterred by your diminishing revenue stream as you gulp every last drop. Happily, professional opportunities can abound, if you manage any effort at outreach—any effort at all. Oh well.

CAPRICORN (DECEMBER 23 - JANUARY 20)

Your glib remarks won't get you what you want. And you may need to decide what you really want. Pink Caps may be unfocused in their personal life but are actually very targeted in their professional life. So, turn your attention to wherever you can get a leg up. Money and prestige can be intoxicating and alluring, even overcoming certain raw personality traits. Ahem.

AQUARIUS (JANUARY 21 - FEBRUARY 19)

Aqueerians make striking first impressions—and folks may strike back! There is no need to try and boss the course this September. The social world may seem to push back with its own set of rules. A few lessons will be learned along the way. Use the time to explore the vast horizon and meet new, foreign and interesting strangers. The stranger the better!

PISCES (FEBRUARY 20 - MARCH 20)

September is the perfect month to solidify relationships and to really get to know a certain someone on an intimate level. Guppies who are searching the seas for a catch may just snag one. Others who are happily committed can make the union stronger. This may require that you defer some of your own personal projects—but that is just the point. Right?

ARIES (MARCH 21 - APRIL 20)

As the summer winds down, gay Rams may be inclined to address their community outreach efforts. This is admirable, but unnecessary. In fact, you would do better to become more introspective and attend to highly personal, family projects. There is plenty of time to become the social bee, with all the buzz later in the fall. Now, become a bit of a drone.

TAURUS (APRIL 21 - MAY 21)

Friends become endless sources of surprise this September. Maybe you are up for a jolt from them or maybe not. Their well-intentioned advice is not useful and could lead you into wasteful endeavours. However, there is a lot to be said for taking life as it comes and enjoying mindless fun and festivities with pals. Keep it all light and frothy…like all those mixed drinks.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21)

Professional aspirations should take a back seat now. Allow yourself some deserved time off where you can recharge and relax. But don't travel far. See if you can get yourself involved in something artistic or healthy—something for the mind and the body. Pink Twins have plenty of time to wrestle the corporate sharks later when fishing is back in season.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23)

While you yearn to for any one-to-one connection, you might be better off opening yourself up to the multitudes and seeing what can happen. Life can take on a free and liberating glow as you interact with more interesting and diverse folks. Gay Crabs who are ready to commit can cull all groups, clubs or circles to find the gems among the trash. Hmmm, or is it just for the jewels?

LEO (JULY 24 - AUGUST 23)

Lust, sex and intimacy can be energizing, shocking and transforming, but also a little too too much for you now. A quiet life might be your preferred cup of tea. Proud Lions find that they prefer a night at home, alone with a good book, rather than hauling their booty all over town. Thankfully, this dreary period shall soon pass…by the holidays.

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